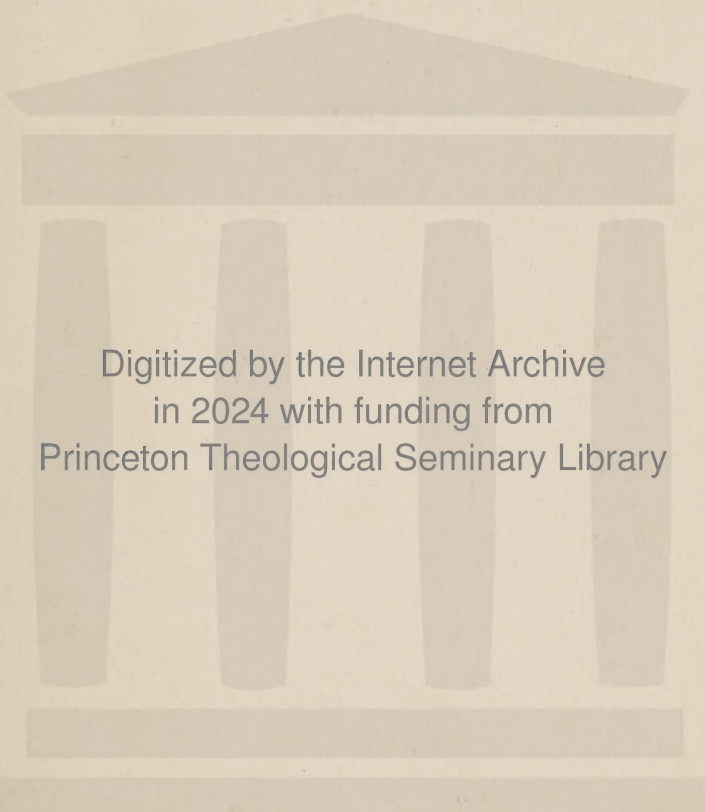


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# CHILD AND CHURCH

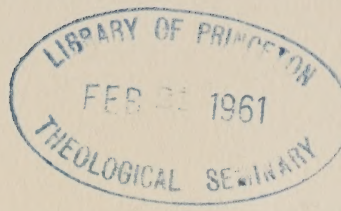
## CHILD AND CHURCH

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Journal of the Board of  
Christianity of the  
United Methodist Church

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# CHILD AND CHURCH

A History of Methodist Church-School Curriculum

C. A. BOWEN

Prepared at the request of the Board of Publication and the Editorial Division of the Board of Education of The Methodist Church.

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TO

The natural and vicarious Christian parents who in church, home, and community have been moved by the needs of children and challenged by their capacity for growth; who envision the place of the child in the kingdom of God and are willing to meet the costs of putting into action their faith in Christian nurture,

This Book Is Dedicated





## PREFACE

This book came out of efforts to satisfy an editor's curiosity. His task was meaningful to him, even exciting. As he carried on his work, the writer became increasingly curious concerning what lay behind what he was doing. Overtones of the past kept making themselves audible. He became convinced that here was a story to tell, and he wondered if he could be one who might try to tell it.

Retirement brought the opportunity to remove the controls from his curiosity and the chance to search into the background of curriculum construction out of which his immediate task had come. The writer made demands upon histories, biographies, random accounts, the *Disciplines* of American Methodism, as well as lesson materials new and old and of various types. The mass of data collected was carefully screened and only matters germane to the story were kept for use. Enthusiasm in regard to the value of the enterprise did not wane as it reached its conclusion. The writer even wondered if what he had brought to light might not be of value to others with similar concern for Christian education and the construction of the curriculum of the church school.

The various denominations have much in common at the point of the materials of Christian teaching. But his own denominational group seems to feel special concerns which relate to such matters as taking account of the validity of the religious experience of the immature, the basic importance of the personal ex-

perience of God, the necessity of freedom and initiative in learning to live as a Christian, the need for grading materials of Christian teaching, and the importance of fellowship in Christian nurture. These concerns affect the character of our curriculum and the ways Christian living is guided in church and home.

It is natural that much of our story revolves around the way Methodists have wrestled with the demands of these concerns that face the church. It begins with the examination of the child's right to reach after the divine love. The story proceeds to show how this basic matter continued to confront the church. The frank challenge of the child to the church today brings the story to its climax.

In its inspiration and early formulation *Child and Church* is the product of what the writer has learned from close associates in the field of Christian education, inspiring fellow craftsmen in editorial office and publishing house, and users of church school curriculum far and near. To them and others far too numerous to name the writer is heavily and happily in debt.

C. A. BOWEN

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## 1—WITHIN REACH OF GOD

A group of ministers were discussing seriously the subject of salvation, especially the salvation of children. One member of the group was certain that in order to be saved a child must pass through a mature experience of conversion. Much was said about the need of being born again. It was understood that such a new birth comes as a result of the power of God exercised through the Holy Spirit. One man recalled his conversion from a life of sin at the age of forty. Another told of how he committed himself to God in his early twenties; another, as a lad of twelve. Then one minister testified that as a small child he had come to love God. He realized that he was God's child and felt that he had always belonged to his heavenly Father.

The discussion moved on to the question of what possible age limits could be placed upon the work of the Spirit of God. Could salvation be found at forty? At twenty? At twelve? At six or younger? Could a wall be built somewhere between childhood and adulthood to contain the saving power of God away from the world's children?

One of the participants had been deeply affected by the dogma that from birth all persons are depraved; that they must become definitely mature before the saving power of God could reach them in their depravity. At this point in the discussion he strode from the room. The rest of the group continued to discuss the matter and came to the conclusion that no age limit can be set against the approach of the Spirit of God to the human spirit.

Christian leaders today have a profound concern for the salvation of children and also for finding ways of nurturing immature persons in the life of the Spirit. They realize that the question is crucial. The way we deal with children in home and church will depend upon whether or not we believe that immature persons are savable and capable of receiving Christian nurture.

As we have indicated, the doctrine of original sin and depravity has long been held by many throughout Christendom. In order to soften the harshness of such teaching, certain theologians argued that a child in his depravity must be given Christian baptism. In this way he could be regenerated and delivered from original sin. Baptism brought the child under the tutelage of the church and the influence of its sacraments. Later he would be able to decide for himself as to his relation to God.<sup>1</sup>

Many Protestants were not satisfied with what seemed to be such a mechanical conception of salvation. The Pietists formed one of these groups. They were convinced that no man-made barrier could keep the divine Spirit from its work of regeneration. They felt that when given a chance in a vitally Christian home and church, God could reach the human spirit at any age of life.

It was in a home of this type that a sensitive child kept responding to the love of God as he shared the religious experiences of his grandmother and aunt, who were taking care of him. He participated in family worship; he discovered that life in the family corresponded with the worship experiences in which he shared. Here he felt the divine Presence. He became sure that he was God's child. The nurture of this child was infused with the presence and purpose of God.

He was sent to a school conducted by a master who held to the dogma that all children are lost. He pressed his pupils to think of themselves as vile sinners and to seek to bring about a mature conversion experience. Under such pressure our young friend tried to feel that he was a sinner and that God was angry with him. This was too much to ask of him, for he could not get out of his consciousness the realization that he belonged to God and need not try to see himself as the enemy of his heavenly Father.

Later the lad grew to manhood. As Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, he came to be known as a man of great influence in Moravia. The experience of his childhood followed him; he could not accept the prevalent opinion that every child is a depraved sinner. As his thinking progressed and he studied more carefully the life and teachings of Jesus, he also rejected the teaching that the child needed for his salvation either baptismal regeneration or a mature conversion experience in order to find salva-

<sup>1</sup> Compare article on "Baptism" in Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*.



tion. Zinzendorf came to believe that continued exposure to divine grace and the divine presence in a godly home, along with the teaching, worship, and fellowship of the church, might lead to the miracle of his salvation—even at an early age.

In the area where this nobleman lived it was common practice for the church to classify its children as: the lost; the awakened; the saved. As we would expect, Zinzendorf refused to agree to such a classification. Concerning the matter, he expressed this judgment:

To the children the Savior gives everything freely. They receive, as it were, without effort on their part. The Holy Spirit brings them into the experience of Grace more fully from year to year.<sup>2</sup>

Such an experience of God and the way of living resulting from it were the important things. Christian growth called, not for standardization, but for nurture. Another great Moravian was Comenius, one of the first of the great educational pioneers. He had written catechisms for children that helped the teacher begin with the simple concepts and experiences of the child and move from that point toward the more complex learning of which adults are capable. In one of his schools Zinzendorf prepared and used a catechism for children developed upon this principle. Some have thought that this may have been the first life-centered Christian teaching material for children produced by Protestants. The nobleman of Moravia was showing himself a worthy follower of the great educator just referred to.

As we have pointed out, Zinzendorf followed his profound Christian convictions in the way he dealt with children. We quote one of his expressions of this conviction:

The human soul had lost its Creator forever. . . . But through the blood of Christ every human soul has regained the privilege of once more becoming like unto him. Through his redemption all the past, all sin, the whole result of the fall—everything is done away.<sup>3</sup>

He goes on to say further:

<sup>2</sup> *Kinder Reden*. See translation, p. 123 in Henry H. Meyer, *Child Nature and Child Nurture According to Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1928).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, February 29, 1756. Tr. Meyer, p. 114.

This is the great and gracious reality of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ and the satisfaction he made for the sins of the whole world. Every soul that has not become again the deliberate servant of unrighteousness is redeemed whether such a person is baptized or not—that is our teaching.<sup>4</sup>

Zinzendorf reinforces the strong statement just made by saying further:

Even if all the rest of the world were to become unfaithful and to forfeit its salvation, the Saviour would still have the largest number of souls, for he has the souls of the children, and they constitute the largest number. These are his. In regard to them there can be no competition between Christ and Satan. Upon them rests no obligation or requirement. They are all made blessed through the blood which was shed upon the cross. No claim can be laid against them until they themselves think and will and renew their bond of sin, and no little child can do that.<sup>5</sup>

Based on this theological foundation, Zinzendorf built his theory and practice of Christian nurture:

What, then is child nurture? It is a sacred, priestly method whereby souls are brought up from infancy so as not to think otherwise than that they belong to Christ and so that blessedness for them shall consist in knowing and serving him, and their greatest misfortune in becoming separated from him in any way whatsoever.<sup>6</sup>

He rejected the old classification of children into "the lost, the awakened, and the saved." In his schools he organized the various age groups into choirs. For children there were choirs for infants in arms, little children, boys, girls, older boys, and older girls. There were also choirs for young men, young women, married people, widows, and widowers. These were both singing and teaching groups, and leaders were carefully chosen and trained and given the title of "choir elders."

The family was expected to play a large part in the Christian nurture of children. To provide effective supervision the church appointed "elders of children" and "spiritual fathers of children"

<sup>4</sup> *Apologetische Schlusz-Schrift*, p. 146. Tr. Meyer, p. 114.

<sup>5</sup> *Kinder Reden*, May 9, 1755. Tr. Meyer, p. 115.

<sup>6</sup> *Eventual Testament—Bd. Sam.*, II. Tr. Meyer, p. 123.

to serve as companions of the children and counselors of their parents. As "vice fathers" and "vice mothers" they were to visit the children in the home and give them instruction. In the plans which Zinzendorf worked out parents were to

prove themselves true guardians, and keep from the children every harm and obstacle, seeking, rather, to foster in them the disposition of friendship toward themselves and toward the Saviour. The Saviour himself will find his way into the heart of every individual child. . . . But many parents, and housefathers especially, obstruct the Saviour's way to the heart of the child through their foolish, absurd eagerness and impatience to form their children according to their own notions, to such an extent that the children simulate and so conduct themselves as to appear that they belong to the Saviour.<sup>7</sup>

This educator was discovering one of the most effective ways of developing hypocrites.

The efforts of parents to nurture the Christian growth of their children were not to go unsupervised. The church appointed "elders of children" and "spiritual fathers of children." As "vice fathers" and "vice mothers" they were to instruct the children "separately and individually" and counsel with the parents as to ways of doing this themselves.

The communities with which Zinzendorf was associated were also organized to some degree on this same theory of Christian nurture. According to his plans, home, church, and community together were expected to carry responsibilities in this matter. They were to participate in the pious endeavor of nurturing and guiding Christian growth and making God's presence real to persons of all ages.

Zinzendorf prepared a simple catechism which the parents were to use with their children. It had a short title—*Lautere Milch*; and it also had a longer one—"The Pure Milk of the Teachings Concerning Jesus Christ." Both are explained by the statement that it is offered in the form of

very simple questions and answers arranged *in accordance with the comprehension of junior and little children, prepared with the best of intentions in honor of the Saviour, for the benefit of little children and the advantage of parents.*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> From *Reden ueber die Vier Evangelisten*, II, 728. Tr. in Meyer, p. 127.

<sup>8</sup> Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 21.



The examiner is impressed by the skill of the writer in beginning with the consideration of things which he thought were within the experience of the learner. We give here an example of how the questioned tried to show how spirit and body are related:

1. What are you? Are you a tree, or an animal, or a human person?

*I am a human person.* [Matt. 8.9.]

2. Do you feel it when I take hold of you?

*I can feel it well.*

3. What is this, is this not flesh?

*Yes, that is flesh.* [Rom. 7.8.]

4. All this flesh which you have is called the body. What is it called?

*The body.* [I Cor. 6.19.]

5. Have you ever seen a person who has died?

*Oh, yes.* [Job. 14.1.]

6. What, then, is the matter with these people? The body is still here, is it not?

*Yes, certainly the body is still here.*

7. How do you know, then, that the people have died?

*They cannot speak any more, they cannot move any more.*

8. Do you know why not?

*I do not know why not.*

9. Behold, dear child, the body is a dwelling place in which the soul or spirit lives. If this comes out, then the body or dwelling place cannot stir or move itself any more. Why, then, do people die?

*Because the soul has moved out of the body.* [James 2.26.]<sup>9</sup>

In this chapter we have quoted at some length from studies made by Henry H. Meyer dealing with the pioneer work in Christian nurture carried on by Count Zinzendorf. The writer has found nothing to compare in accuracy and penetration with what Dr. Meyer has done here. A real scholar himself, Dr. Meyer's mastery of the German language made it possible for him to locate and study material little known in America. It was the writer's privilege to be associated with him during and after the period when he was Editor of Church School Literature of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

As the reader has discovered, this chapter centers upon the fact, as Zinzendorf sees it, that the child is within reach of God. In terms of religion he is a proper subject of Christian nurture and deserves to be given materials of learning consistent with

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix I, pp. 186-87.



his needs. The story of how the church has struggled with the problems of vital curriculum, which follow, provides only a small part of what might be told.

## 2—CONFRONTED WITH CHRISTIAN NURTURE

While the Moravians were busy putting into practice the concept of Christian nurture which Zinzendorf had discovered in the Christian gospel, John Wesley was passing through a religious crisis. His efforts to teach children in Georgia, as well as his other efforts at missionary service, had failed. He returned to England broken in spirit and faltering in his confidence in religion. He felt that he had missed his way as he planned the work of his life.

While in this state of mind, Wesley came into contact with men who had a grasp upon Christian living that fascinated him. He began to visit meetings of small groups or societies, many of which had come under the influence of the Moravians, and he went frequently to a small room in Aldersgate Street, London, to participate in the meetings being held there. There is no need to repeat here what we know so well—that the Aldersgate experience was a mighty, creative crisis in Wesley's life. As James R. Joy tells us:

The Aldersgate experience was in the fullest sense of the word an *awakening*. All his slumbering spiritual gifts and powers were aroused to vigorous and productive life. The vision which there burst upon him was like the throwing of an electric switch, releasing energy into the marvelous mechanism prepared by nature, nurture, and all his previous training.<sup>1</sup>

As might be expected, Wesley followed up this experience and sought further help from the persons who had guided him at Aldersgate. He made a visit to Herrnhut and consulted with

<sup>1</sup> From *John Wesley's Awakening*, by James Richard Joy (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1937).

Count Zinzendorf concerning his work there. He was allowed to observe what was being done and the resultant effects. What he saw validated what Wesley had discovered at Aldersgate: here were Christians living together in communities closely resembling those of the early followers of Jesus. As Wesley viewed them, these persons were "new creatures in Christ." As we would express it today, "They had something."

After his return to England, Wesley wrote in his diary:

I would gladly have spent my life there; but my Master calling me to labour in another part of His vineyard, on *Monday* the 14th I was constrained to take my leave of this happy place. . . . Oh when shall THIS Christianity cover the earth, as the 'waters cover the sea'? <sup>2</sup>

In dramatic fashion we see confronted with Christian nurture the man who was to become Methodism's founder.

On returning to England Wesley renewed his contacts with the societies previously referred to. They seemed to express much the same concept of Christian living which he had found on his visit to Zinzendorf. He seems to have reached these conclusions:

1. That inward experience is central to Christian living.
2. That it is necessary to teach in small groups selected, or graded, according to some chosen standard.
3. That it is necessary to begin early to teach children in home and in church.
4. That sacred music, especially singing, is a potent element in Christian learning.

In his *Journal* he quotes from the Constitution of Moravian Brethren at Herrnhut:

The Pastor, or Teacher, is to be an Overseer of the whole flock and every person therein; to baptize the children; diligently to form their minds, and bring them up 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord'; when he finds in them a sincere love of the Cross, then to receive them into the Church.<sup>3</sup>

In his wide reading John Wesley must have become well acquainted with the theory of nurture and guidance in learning.

<sup>2</sup> Wesley's *Diary*, August, 1738. From *The Journal of John Wesley* (London: The Epworth Press, 1938), II, 28.

<sup>3</sup> *The Journal of John Wesley*, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

Surely while visiting Zinzendorf he must have discovered much about the life of Comenius, the Moravian bishop. It was Comenius who described the formalized schools of his day as "slaughter-houses of the mind . . . places where minds are fed on words."

This pioneer in education may have been the first teacher to grade his pupils and to use pictures and objects in teaching children. It was not long before John Wesley prepared three educational principles for his own use:

1. Proceed from the known to the unknown—"Carefully observe . . . the few ideas which they [the learners] have already, and endeavour to graft what you say upon them."

2. Interest children in things rather than words. 'Bid the child look up to the sun, let him *see* the trees . . . the flowers.'

3. Education should be for all.'

From Volume I of *A New History of Methodism*, from which we have just quoted, we give the following paraphrase:

Children received the special attention of the preachers (Wesley's helpers). "Where there are ten children in a Society," said Wesley, "we must meet them at least an hour every week." In the homes he visited each child was to receive from the preacher the *Instructions for Children* (a teaching manual) and on his next visit he was to hear what had been learned by heart. Though, like Isaac Watts, he had no children of his own, he was devoted to young folk.

Wesley wrote tracts which we might describe as early Methodist curriculum materials for children. Some of these were *Tokens for Children*, *Lessons for Children*, *Prayers for Children*, and *Instructions for Children*, already referred to. From these and other things that he wrote, we might well draw the conclusion that the founder of Methodism was certain that holy living was possible in childhood, even in children of tender years. He believed that God's grace was free, that divine power can transform any person who is able to come to God in faith. Concerning young children, Wesley said to his preachers:

If you say, 'Nay, but they cannot understand you when they are

'*A New History of Methodism*, ed. Townsend, Workman, and Eayrs (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), I, 218.



## CHILD AND CHURCH

young,' I answer, No; nor when they are fifty years old, unless God opens their understanding. And can he not do this at any age? <sup>5</sup>

John Wesley believed strongly in the baptism of children. It initiated a change in the life of the baptized person which was to be carried on through Christian nurture in church and home. Parents were expected to assume much of the responsibility for this nurture. Even godfathers and godmothers were to be chosen by the parents with the idea in mind that they were to help their godchildren realize the meaning and importance of their baptism.

Another powerful influence exerted in the opposite direction was Susanna Wesley, who was to be reckoned with as the plans of John Wesley proceeded. Since he had no children of his own, it was to be expected that John would look to his mother for counsel in the matter of child training. She was strongly convinced that the believer must look upon God as a stern and powerful ruler. Human nature was sinful and perverse; education must center in discipline. At the beginning the parent must break the will of the child.

John Wesley was called upon to give advice to Christian parents on how to rear their children. He asked his mother to write him some suggestions which he might use in preparing a sermon on this subject. Among other things, Susanna Wesley had this to say:

In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done is to conquer their will. . . . And when the will of a child is totally subdued, and it is brought to revere and stand in awe of the parents, then a great many childish follies . . . may be passed by. . . . I insist upon conquering the will of children betimes, because this is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education without which both precept and example will be ineffectual. But when this is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of being governed by the reason and piety of its parents, till its own understanding comes to maturity, and the principles of religion have taken root in the mind.<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Prince tells us:

The children of this family were taught, as soon as they could speak, the Lord's Prayer, which they were made to say at rising and at bedtime

<sup>5</sup> See John W. Prince, *Wesley on Religious Education* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1926), p. 85. From *Wesley's Words*, II, 431.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 110-11.



constantly; to which, as they grew bigger, were added a short prayer for their parents, and some collects; a short catechism, and some portions of Scripture, as their memories could bear.<sup>7</sup>

We can easily understand how deeply the thinking of John Wesley was affected by his mother's point of view. She had a special interest in him. When he was very young she set aside Thursday of each week for his intensive instruction. Among the books which she provided for her children were *Exposition of The Apostles' Creed* and a rather mature interpretation of the Ten Commandments. Mrs. Wesley prepared *A Religious Conference, Written for the Use of My Children* in the form of a dialogue with her daughter Amelia.<sup>8</sup>

As Dr. Prince, who gives us this information, goes on to say: "Back of the rules of her 'way of education,' as she called it, and back of the intent that animates it, lies her theology. She believed in total depravity . . . and that the root of all evil is self-will. The sinner must repent and appropriate the salvation which the death of Christ brings. This world is only a preparation for the next. Mrs. Wesley was near the end of life before she accepted the fact of the witness of the Spirit to one's acceptance with God."<sup>9</sup>

As we have indicated, Susanna's son was conditioned in no small degree by the strong convictions and impressive personality of his mother. Yet he was disturbed by the fact that over against the dark fixation of the Calvinistic beliefs held by his mother he must place the discovery recently made that every child holds out some promise of transformation through Christian teaching. The claims of the two opposing points of view pressed upon him. He could not agree to imprison the inherent powers of the young in the dungeon of a harsh dogma. Wesley's sensitive awareness of the possibilities of childhood had been revealed while he was a missionary in Georgia, conducting a school for the younger members of the community. When attendance declined, he learned that some pupils had to go to school barefoot and were ashamed in the presence of the others. The next morning John Wesley appeared at school with bare feet. It meant a great deal for an Oxford don to humiliate himself in this fashion. He must have loved the very

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

young even though he had little understanding of them. This experience might have helped prepare the way for the change in Wesley's outlook that took place in Herrnhut where children were viewed as being within the grace of God and, as such, proper candidates for Christian nurture.

We must not forget that the state of society all about him was deeply degraded. It was easy to conclude that something was terribly wrong with people. In this frame of mind Wesley attacked the teaching of Rousseau as set forth in his *Émile*—that to begin with man was pure and perfect. But this did not prevent Wesley from asserting that the evil state of human life is not hopeless. Something could be done; people could be delivered from sin and led to complete freedom from the power of evil. He said:

Education is designed to set it [the evil state of things] right. This, by the grace of God, is to turn the bias from self-will, pride, anger, revenge, and the love of the world, to resignation, lowliness, meekness, and the love of God.<sup>10</sup>

Nothing but God's saving power can make man the new creation that God desires. But as Umphrey Lee tells us:

He did not expect that man's experience of conversion and of present salvation would necessarily produce a Christian life. Therefore, he included in the program of his societies a system of education and of discipline. For this he made use of the traditional exercises of the Christian Church, fasting, meditation, prayer, and constant good works, as well as the guidance of religious societies and classes. There is no claim that Wesley's *system* is one which could be adopted in all ages and times. . . . What Wesley intended for a people, largely uneducated and cared for by no religious agency, and what may have come of his system are different things. But in a day when religion is rebuked for an unwarranted trust in a discredited human nature, Wesley stands out as a realistic leader who believed that the bias of human nature can only be changed by the grace of God plus discipline and education.<sup>11</sup>

It must be remembered that the first struggling societies of Methodism differed widely from the other Protestant churches in religious outlook. Some of these believed in deism, which

<sup>10</sup> Umphrey Lee, *John Wesley and Modern Education* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1936), p. 315.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316.

pictured a personal God as creator of the world and man's final judge, but as being neither immanent in nature nor revealed in history or religious experience. Most of them held to the sacramentarian idea that the institutions and exercises of the church in themselves had power to bring salvation. The doctrine of predestinaton was generally held, along with belief in total depravity. Methodism either rejected or greatly modified all these current beliefs. It held that a person could have assurance of God's presence and power; that "heart felt religion" ranked higher than the exercises and sacraments of the church, important as they were; that God's grace was free and none were without hope of salvation. As E. B. Chappell tells us:

By these changes in theological attitude Methodism began the process of clearing the way for the development of a rational and consistent theory and program of religious education. . . . The problem of religious education, therefore, is to discover the laws and conditions of spiritual growth and the most effective ways of opening the channels of divine grace to the child's heart. . . .

We are not surprised, however, to discover that early Methodism did not at once see all the implications of this theological position. . . . All the early Methodist leaders had grown up under the influence of a rigid Calvinism. . . . Methodism . . . found itself under the necessity of seeking constantly to set up barriers against the influence of certain prevailing religious beliefs of the larger groups by which it was governed. And the task was made all the more difficult by the fact that it was under the necessity of constantly defending itself against the charge of grave heresy. . . .

From the beginning Wesley gave unusual attention to Christian education. First of all he insisted upon the importance of "family religion," which he declared to be "the great desideratum among Methodists." While, however, he continued to regard the home as the primary school of religion, he came more and more to think of religious education as one of the chief functions of the Church. . . . He exhorted his preachers diligently to instruct the children. "Unless," he told them, "we can take care of the rising generation, the present revival . . . will last only the age of a man." . . .

Not only do we find in the life of Wesley an ever-deepening interest in religious education, but also a gradually changing attitude toward childhood. When . . . he was still dominated by the Puritanic tradition. . . . Children were still to him desperate little sinners all of whose normal impulses must be suppressed by stern and rigid discipline. As the years passed, however, and the implications of his Arminian theology became



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clearer to him, there came about a radical change both in his attitude toward the young and in his methods of dealing with them. Childhood became . . . something to be loved and cherished and developed in holiness through wise guidance and intimate association with Christlike men and women.<sup>12</sup>

We find similar insights in *The Kingdom in the Cradle* by James Atkins. This volume was written by the Sunday School Editor of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, of the present century and exercised a strong influence upon the thinking of this denomination concerning child nurture. Bishop Atkins says:

Jesus was in the highest sense the champion of childhood. In this respect he was unlike all the other great masters of men. They understood but very imperfectly, if at all, the divine purpose in the long-continued helplessness of the human offspring. Jesus saw in it the chief opportunity for the establishment of a spiritual kingdom among men. . . .

Jesus took the child as the type of an acceptable membership in the kingdom, and announced the inclusion of all others who should be converted by becoming like them, so he put the guard of the millstone figure around the simple faith of childhood, and then proceeded to place adult believers who were like the children, in respect particularly of being weak and humble, under the same protections against the stronger who would take advantage of their weakness to oppress, injure, or turn them from the faith. . . .

There are some who object to this scientific treatment of the religious nature on the ground that it reduces the subject to the plane of the naturalistic and possibly the materialistic. But nothing is further from the truth. . . . It certainly does not heighten the supernatural aspects of religion to prove that man was so constructed originally, or so affected by the fall, that there is not in the race any constitutional demand for religion, or inherent impulse toward it. The response of man's nature to the external and supernatural provisions which the Christian religion furnishes is one of the finest confirmations of the divine origin of it. It furnishes the strongest demonstration that the Creator of man is also the author of man's religion. . . .

I sincerely believe in the fall of man, and that thereby evil tendencies came to be so much a part of human nature as to demand a divine remedy. It has been commonly taught that the offspring of Adam are, by virtue of their relation to him, wholly depraved. It is possible that

<sup>12</sup> *Recent Development of Religious Education in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1935), pp. 15-17, 19.



considering the signs upon which this judgment is made too much is ascribed to remote ancestor and not enough to those who are nearer. Whatever may be the true theory, the practical troubles from which we suffer are not due so much to Adam as to the Adamses; that is, to those just back of us whose personal impulses we feel in our own blood and by whose neglect or leadership we have reached our present status. But whether this depravity be partial or entire, whether it be wholly ascribable to Adam or distributable to our intervening ancestry, it is an awful fact for which a divine remedy is provided in Jesus Christ. That this remedy is adequate, no Christian ever questions. He knows its efficacy and its divine amplitude. The question of supreme interest is not the old one of sin and its cure, that is settled; but rather one of the time and method for the application of that remedy in order that it may be most effectual. The doctrine of the Christian system is that the recovery is possible only by a divine regenerative influence that can supersede this order. . . .

In the case of the adult . . . the conditions are plainly repentance toward God and faith in Christ. However varied may be the experience of such, there is one thing common to all, that is, that no man ever repented for Adam's transgression or experienced faith in Christ that he might be saved from the evil consequence of deeds done by any ancestor, even the one nearest of kin. The burden of every penitent heart is its own transgression of the divine law, and in the act of faith the immaculate Saviour is seen wholly in relation to the personal sins and sinfulness of the penitent. But when we turn from the adult to the child the situation is entirely different. . . .

The question is, whether or not God, in view of the redeeming work of Christ, is at liberty without further conditions to apply to the benefits of the atonement in so far as they are to affect the state of man in relation to the fall? In other words, as the race inherits its evil nature from Adam, is the Creator in a position through the work of Christ to countervail these evil conditions by a divine act, known as the new birth? Is there any reason to the contrary in the case of infants? <sup>18</sup>

In the type of argument current half a century ago, Bishop Atkins is showing that the question of the access of the saving power of God's love to the heart of the child will not down. John Wesley had a heart too warm and an intellect too alert to admit without discomfort the possible truth of the opposite view of Christian nurture.

<sup>18</sup> James Atkins, *The Kingdom in the Cradle* (Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1905), pp. 88-89, 104, 127, 144-47.

It has been possible to present only a few examples of how Methodism has been confronted with the claims of Christian nurture and a system of Christian teaching built upon these claims. The children under the care of the church must be taught. This involves a basic question which we shall discuss in the next chapter.

### 3—THE CHILD MUST BE TAUGHT—BUT HOW?

The question phrased in the title of the chapter never ceases to recur as Christian nurture is carried on by home and church. John Wesley had no children of his own. He was dependent upon his mother and other parents that he knew for the opinions he came to hold. We have already mentioned the tracts or teaching manuals for children which he prepared and put into use. These are among the chief sources of information and insight open today to one desirous of finding out what the founder of Methodism actually thought about the religious state of children and the desirable ways of dealing with them.

"Wesley firmly believed," says Dr. Prince,

that a genuine and deeply religious life is possible to childhood. At just what age he expected to see holiness manifested is difficult to say. . . . Wesley set no rigid time in early life before which it is impossible to be pious. . . . [He described] several instances of piety in children of extremely tender years. . . .

[This] piety [is] marked by a seriousness of temper and behavior, a slight mystic sense, a tender conscience, and a deep concern for the spiritual condition of others. . . . His reasons for holding to the possibility of mature religious consciousness in children so young lie in his doctrine of grace, that when the Spirit is the teacher there is no delay in learning. The things of God cannot be pressed too soon upon them. . . .

Wesley's theory of religious education is in keeping with his belief that every stage in religious experience is possible to childhood. The

goal of all work with children at home, in the schools, and in the Methodist societies is to make them pious, to lead to personal religion, and to insure salvation. It is not merely to bring them up so that they do no harm and abstain from outward sin, nor to get them accustomed to the use of the means of grace, saying their prayers, reading good books, and the like, nor is it to train them in right opinions. The purpose of religious education is to instill in children true religion, holiness, and the love of God and mankind, and to train them in the image of God.<sup>1</sup>

So far as we can tell there were two main drives in Wesley's early efforts with children: one was discipline; the other was the more or less disciplinary use of memorization of religious materials. In this he was following to a considerable extent the practices current among Protestants at the time. As soon as the Protestant Reformation got under way efforts were made to provide instruction in the Christian religion in the common speech of the people. The Waldenses prepared a catechism for use in their schools. A similar set of manuals were used by John Huss and his helpers in Bohemia. Across the English Channel John Wycliffe brought out a catechism in the English language containing questions on the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. The Protestant belief that the individual's salvation was dependent in considerable part on his understanding of the Scriptures brought the Bible to the fore. The memorizing of passages from its pages was looked upon as religious education at its best. Luther stated the conviction thus:

Above all things let the Scriptures be the chief and most frequently used reading book, both in the primary and high schools; and the very young should be kept in the Gospels. Is it not proper and right that every human being, by the time that he has reached his tenth year, should be familiar with the Holy Gospels in which the very core and marrow of his life is bound? <sup>2</sup>

By the time of the Reformation the churches of Great Britain were requiring the curates to teach by rote the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed in English. Soon a catechism for children was given a place in the Prayerbook. Howell's *Catechism*, prepared by the dean of St. Paul's, appeared in 1570 and became a

<sup>1</sup> Prince, *op. cit.*, pp. 82, 85, 87-88.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from Parker, *The History of Modern Religious Education*, p. 44.



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standard manual for use in the instruction of children in the Church of England. The predominantly ecclesiastical, and at times polemical, character of the subject matter used is well illustrated by the title page of *The Protestant Tutor*, published in London in 1716:

The Protestant Tutor, instructing Youth and Others in the Compleat Method of Spelling, Reading and Writing True English: Also Discovering to Them the Notorious Errors, Damnable Doctrines and cruel Massacres of the bloody Baptism which England may expect from a Popish successor. To which is prefaced a timely Memorial to all True Protestants Demonstrating the Certainty of a horrid and damnable Popish Plot now carrying on in Great Britain, in order to destroy His Majesty, King George and Royal Family, Introduce a Popish Successor and involve their Kingdom in Blood and Fire. Likewise the Most Gracious Declaration for Liberty of Conscience Published by Order of King and Council.<sup>3</sup>

Manuals containing catechetical material dominated the field of teaching materials when John Wesley began to take thought for those who had joined his new societies. He began preaching sermons specially designed for children. He organized his converts into classes for instruction in the processes of the spiritual life; and in these classes he emphasized the use of the Bible. All this represented a noticeable reaction from the definitely mechanical use of materials then current.

In his famous sermon on "Family Religion" Wesley says to parents:

"You should particularly endeavor to instruct your children early, plainly, frequently, and patiently." . . .

"Instruct them early." . . . "I know no cause why a parent should not just then [at an early age] begin to speak of the best things, the things of God," as well as of trifling or bad things. . . .

"Speak to them plainly." . . . "Carefully observe the few ideas which they have already, and endeavor to graft what you say upon them." . . . On one occasion, to illustrate his point. . . . he preached to a group of five hundred and fifty Methodist Sunday school children. . . . from the text, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me; and I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

<sup>3</sup> From a facsimile, reproduced in Monroe, *A Brief Course in the History of Education* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1907), opposite p. 182.



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“Teach them . . . *frequently*.” . . . Something about God might well be said many times in the day, instead of talking exclusively about other matters and postponing the most important knowledge till children are older. . . .

“Teach them patiently.” By this is meant teach with perseverance, earnestly and diligently.”<sup>4</sup>

After providing the explanatory comments on the points in Wesley’s sermon, Dr. Prince, in his *Wesley on Religious Education*, goes on to say:

In order to assist parents, schoolmasters, and preachers in their teaching, Wesley prepared several tracts to be used as the basis of instruction. Of these the *Lessons for Children* and *Instructions for Children* are the most important. . . . The preface to the *Lessons* is as follows:

“I have endeavored . . . to select the plainest and the most useful portions of the Scripture; such as a Christian may the most easily understand, and such as it most concerns him to know. . . . Beware . . . of making children parrots instead of Christians. . . . Regard not *how much*, but *how well*, to how good purpose, they read.”

Wesley prepared the *Lessons* in order to guide his people to the most useful portions of the Old Testament and the Apochrypha. He did not make a similar abridgement of the New Testament because he felt that all of it should be read. . . . Wesley gave the *Instructions for Children* chief place among text books for children in the home. [It is in large part a translation from a French work by Abbé Fleury and Pierre Poiret entitled, *The Solid Principles of the Religion of the Christian Life Applied to the Teaching of Children*.] Section one is a catechism of twelve lessons on God, the creation and fall of man, the redemption of man, the means of grace, and hell and heaven. . . . Section two deals more specifically with the nature “Of God, and of the Soul of Man.” . . . Section three is entitled “How to Regulate our Desires.” . . . Section four is on “How to Regulate Our Understanding.” . . . The last section is on “How to Regulate our Practice.” . . . The *Instructions* concludes with an exhortation to parents to follow its teachings. . . .

The *Tokens for Children* is another text recommended by Wesley to be used in teaching children. . . . It consists of ten carefully abridged examples of conversion, holy living, and dying of young children.<sup>5</sup>

Private and public prayer within the family circle were, ac-

<sup>4</sup> Prince, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-24.

<sup>5</sup> Prince, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-26.

cording to Wesley, important means of teaching religion. He felt that such practice of prayer should be after the child had been "awakened." (We note here the assumption about the child's religious life to which Zinzendorf objected.) It seemed possible to Wesley to have a degree of grading in line with the stage of spiritual development of the young praying Christian. Wesley prepared prayers for children to be used twice each day. He also provided for them "A Prayer for Relations, Friends, etc. To be Used After Morning and Evening Prayer"; also a "Grace Before Meat" and a "Grace After Meals." <sup>6</sup>

John Wesley did not overlook the importance of hymns in his efforts to guide and train the children under his care. He included in a book which he called *Hymns for Children* a number of hymns written by his brother Charles. John wrote this preface for the use of the singing teachers:

There are two ways of writing or speaking to children: the one is, to let ourselves down to them; the other, to lift them up to us. Dr. Watts has wrote in the former way, and has succeeded admirably well, speaking to children as children, and leaving them as he found them. The following hymns are written on the other plan: they contain strong and manly sense; yet expressed in such plain and easy language as even children may understand. But when they do understand them, they will be children no longer, only in years and in stature.<sup>7</sup>

Out of the varied information to be gathered concerning the attitude of John Wesley toward the religious education of those who made up the early Methodist societies, we are able to form a fairly clear picture of a deeply spiritual leader, firmly fixed in his religious beliefs and concerned to share them with his followers. Early in life he was exposed to the rigid teaching of Calvinism. Later on he placed beside them his own insights into the prime importance of the immediate presence of God in the soul and also the deep impressions which he carried away from Herrnhut, which showed convincingly the importance of Christian nurture and the need for dealing with the spiritual capacities of the very young. As this observer sees it, Wesley seemed to realize that there must be growth and development after conversion

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* See pp. 128 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Green, *The Works of John and Charles Wesley. A Bibliography* (London: C. H. Kelly, 1896, p. 246.

either of adults or of children. The home was to play an important part. When parents chose godfathers and godmothers to participate in a child's baptism they were to be made to understand the importance of their tasks. Pastors must help parents to realize that they are teachers of religion and, as such, are to teach in the home. Societies were also to form classes for children. From the very beginning Methodism wove the spirit of nurture and guidance of the young into the very texture of its existence.

Prince tells us:

John Wesley maintained a policy of religious education definitely framed and correlated throughout. His theory makes use of nearly every element of his theology and is indissolubly associated with it. If his theological premises are granted, the consequent educational principles appear rational and logical; in any other light many of them are eccentric and may be justly questioned. It is only natural that, with his severe view of human nature and its redemption, he should regard the task of discipline and instruction based upon it with such a serious attitude.

The significance of Wesley as an educator should not be judged, however, so much by the particular details of his pedagogy as by the deep-seated conviction which he held that education itself is the most probable method of bringing religion to children and making them Christian. He championed the central idea of religious education that children are not to be left to grow up in sin, but are, rather, to be carefully disciplined and instructed from their earliest years, and with this in view he harmonized his doctrine of conversion. He furthermore gave a large place to children in the program of the revival and labored to found and conduct schools for them both within and without his societies.<sup>8</sup>

Over a quarter of a century before Robert Raikes set up his Sunday schools in Gloucester, England, Wesley was arranging for the special religious instruction of the children related to his societies.<sup>9</sup>

The first Methodist Conference [which was held] in 1744 at the Foundry in London [was called upon] to consider: "1. What to teach. 2. How to teach. And 3. What to do? i.e., how to regulate our doctrine, discipline, and practice." . . . [At this same conference] the question was asked: "Might not the children in every place be formed into a little

<sup>8</sup> Prince, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

<sup>9</sup> Wardle, *History of the Sunday School Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1918), pp. 11 ff.



society?" To this the answer was given: "Let the preachers try, by meeting them together, and giving suitable exhortations. At each meeting, we may first set them a lesson in the *Instructions* or *Tokens for Children*. 2. Hear them repeat it. 3. Explain it to them in an easy, familiar manner. 4. Often ask, "What have I been saying?" And strive to fasten it on their hearts."<sup>10</sup>

It was in 1780 that Robert Raikes, a manufacturer in Gloucester, rented a private house and opened a school for delinquent children. Since there were no child labor laws, these children worked six days a week; and the only time in which a school for them could be conducted was Sunday.

The story is familiar—a kindhearted philanthropist undertook to deal with the hideous conditions existing all about him, for illiteracy and crime were rampant among adults as well as children. Raikes hired teachers for his "Sunday school" at a shilling a day. We are told that these young delinquents were herded into the school with a chain and a block of wood attached to their ankles. It required much corporal punishment to keep them tractable. They were compelled to wash themselves and to come to school fairly clean. The instructors tried to teach them the rudiments of manners and decent speech. They were taught to read partly through the use of the Bible and the catechism. Attendance at one church service was compulsory.

At times this and other similar groups were called "pauper schools," which at first was an accurate title. Such Sunday schools were really efforts to help the underprivileged. In parts of Europe they are still considered missionary and eleemosynary in character. Many churchmen of that day were opposed to the Sunday-school movement. It was considered secular and dangerous to religious teaching. Laymen worked as its leaders more or less apart from the churches. For the Sunday school to teach the rudiments of religion was to invade the rights and privilege of home and church.<sup>11</sup>

The first notice of such a thing as a Sunday school, so some believe, is found in Wesley's diary. On July 18, 1784, he preached twice at Bingley Church. His entry for that day is:

<sup>10</sup> Prince, *op. cit.*, p. 133, 135.

<sup>11</sup> See G. H. Betts, *The Curriculum of Religious Education* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1924).



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Before service I stepped into the Sunday school, which contains two hundred and forty children taught every Sunday by several masters, and superintended by the curate. So many children in one parish are restrained from open sin, and taught a little good manners, at least, as well as to read the Bible. I find these schools springing up wherever I go. Perhaps God may have a deeper end therein, than men are aware of. Who knows but some of these schools may become nurseries for Christians? <sup>12</sup>

Here we note that Wesley is able to see the possible value of this new institution.

Tyerman also tells us:

Similar institutions had been begun in Leeds, where Wesley was about to hold his conference. The town was already divided into seven divisions; and had twenty-six schools, containing above two thousand scholars taught by forty-five masters. Each school commenced at one o'clock in the afternoon, the children being taught reading, writing, and religion. At three, they were taken to their respective churches; then conducted back to school where a portion of some useful book was read, a psalm sung, and the whole concluded with a form of prayer composed and printed for that purpose. Boys and girls were kept separate. There were four "inquisitors," persons whose office it was to spend Sunday afternoon in visiting the twenty-six schools, to ascertain who were absent, and then in seeking the absentees at their homes or in the public streets. The masters were mostly pious men, and were paid from one to two shillings a Sunday for their services, according to their respective qualifications. Each had a written list of his scholars' names, which he was required to call over, every Sunday, at half-past one, and half-past five. Five clergymen visited the schools, and gave addresses." <sup>13</sup>

The child must be taught—that was coming to be recognized as a critical need which Christian people could not neglect. But how? This part of the question with which we opened the chapter remains unanswered. Up to this point in our story we see only some of the first efforts to find what is involved in the nurture of children.

<sup>12</sup> *The Journal of John Wesley, op. cit., VII, 3.*

<sup>13</sup> Tyerman, *The Life and Times of Wesley*, III, 415-16.

## 4—SUNDAY SCHOOL—PROMISE AND PROBLEM

We have discovered that this infant agency called the Sunday school was considered a problem. The more farsighted churchmen realized that it held real promise for the service of Christian teaching. John Wesley was one of these. In *The Life and Times of Wesley* we are told:

No man in the nation took a greater interest in the institution of Sunday-schools than Wesley. "I am glad," said he, to Richard Rodda, in a letter dated January 17, 1787, "I am glad that you have taken in hand that blessed work of setting up Sunday-schools in Chester. It seems, these will be one great means of reviving religion throughout the nation. I wonder Satan has not sent out some able champion against them." . . .

Charles Atmore had recently commenced a Sunday-school, in the Orphan House, at Newcastle. . . . And Michael Longridge, one of Wesley's best local preachers, in the north of England, had published a 12 mo. pamphlet . . . entitled, "Sunday-schools, Recommended as a Religious Institution: with a Plan for their Extension at a small Ex-course of the week a barber or hair-dresser, out to the chapel to crop letter to Atmore [quoted in part]: "I am glad you have set up Sunday schools in Newcastle. It is one of the noblest institutions which has been seen in Europe for some centuries. . . . Nothing can prevent the increase of this blessed work, but the neglect of the instruments."<sup>1</sup>

Some years after the death of John Wesley a little book bearing the title *A History of the Origin and Progress of the Sunday-Schools in the City of Bristol and Its Vicinity* was issued under the patronage of the Bristol Methodist Sunday-School Society. To get the enterprise under way some friends purchased spelling books and copies of Dr. Watts's *Hymns for Children*. It was necessary to borrow copies of the New Testament from The

<sup>1</sup> Tyerman, *op. cit.*, III, 500, 604.

Strangers' Friend Society. Between forty and fifty boys and girls were enrolled. In the author's words:

The introduction of so many wild and uncultivated children into a place new to them, and for a purpose to them equally strange, produced on this ever to be remembered day a scene novel and interesting. . . . The children, who had been gathered under the fostering wing of instruction, were not only rough in their manners, but ragged and dirty in their persons. Their hair for want of cutting was grown very long, and "like Eagles' feathers," presented a very shaggy figure. This was presented to Mr. Stock [one of the benefactors] . . . who sent in the course of the week a barber or hair-dresser, out to the chapel to crop the youngsters' hair; they were desired to comb, and come with their hands and faces clean the following Sunday. . . .

Besides the teachers there were "visitors" who opened and closed each school session usually with some form of worship. The "visitors" also kept a record of what was done each day. They checked to find out if the scholars had maintained the rule of cleanliness and had behaved with some degree of decency. Those who would not obey the rules were sent away. No books could be taken from the schoolroom without the special permission of the "visitors." School hours were from ten till noon; and from two to four-thirty in the afternoon. Both teachers and "visitors" were paid a small amount. Each absence led to a forfeit of three pence, to be disposed of for the benefit of the school.<sup>2</sup>

As other schools came into being a "Regulation and Reward Fund" was provided. Certain other regulations are worth quoting: "The attention of all the scholars who are able to read shall be directed to the learning of the Scripture lessons according to the selection already printed by the local committee."<sup>3</sup>

We note here the vestige of a practice later common to the supplying of Sunday-school lessons, a practice which led to the birth of lesson committees and curriculum committees.

The regulations also provided that for every such lesson repeated from memory the scholar shall receive a ticket marked

<sup>2</sup> Taken from *A History of the Origin and Progress of the Sunday-Schools in the City of Bristol and Its Vicinity, Under the Patronage of the Bristol Methodist Sunday-school Society*, by John S. Broad (Bristol: E. Broad, 1816), pp. 15-17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



"Search the Scriptures," six of which shall entitle the gainer to a Certificate of Diligence in Scripture lessons. The following words shall be printed on the back of the Certificate of Diligence in Scripture lessons: "Value [two or three pence was usually written in here] to be paid in Books or Clothing at the Annual Meeting of the Schools, if the Scholar continue till then. Keep this very clean. (Signed) Superintendent." A footnote emphasizes the importance of proper respect for the Holy Scriptures: "Children should be taught on all occasions, to show that love and respect for the Holy Scriptures, which they so justly claim. Hence they should not be allowed to toss about the Word of God in a careless manner; nor should any teacher strike a child on the head with that *sacred book*. This is inexcusable." <sup>4</sup>

Some type of teaching had been carried on from the beginning at the Foundry in London under the direction of Wesley. Other work was carried forward at New Chapel. In March, 1798, a Methodist Sunday-school Society was established at City Road Chapel to supervise the work of the schools in that vicinity. It seems that material rewards were also a part of the program.

To those accustomed to the efficient system on which Sunday-schools are conducted by unpaid teachers at the present time, It may seem strange to record, that "by way of reward, . . . bonnets and tippets were distributed for regular attendance, and shoes in November." . . .

To encourage the plan of gratuitous teaching [the Stockport Society having for some years given their teachers eighteenpence every Sunday for their services], the treasurer of the London Society gave a dinner annually to the visitors and teachers who were invited by circular and ticket. <sup>5</sup>

In 1803 the Sunday-School Union was founded, possibly for the purpose of correlating the activities of the local societies or Sunday schools with which the Methodists were associated. We are told that one of the founders of the Union, Mr. William Harri-cott,

compiled the Scripture Reading Lessons published by them, [the founders of the Union]. He was the first who prepared and published text-books for every day in the year. In 1803, he commenced the publi-

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> George J. Stevenson, *City Road Chapel, London, and Its Associations* (London: George J. Stevenson, 1872), p. 154.



cation of The Youth's Magazine, aided by two of his friends, said to be "the parent of all the religious periodicals for young people," and he was the principal editor of this magazine for ten years.<sup>6</sup>

We have the story that during the sessions of his last conference Wesley was asked the best ways of conserving the results of the great revival and safeguarding its future effectiveness. His reply was, "Take care of the rising generation." At another time Methodism's founder had said: "I reverence the young because they may be useful after I am dead."<sup>7</sup>

From his personal memoirs we learn that at eighty years of age Wesley had preached a sermon from the pulpit at Stockton-on-Tees. In his memoirs this was the entry in which he described what took place when he descended from the pulpit:

I was inclosed by a body of children; one of whom, and another, sunk down upon their knees, until they were all kneeling. So I kneeled down myself and began praying for them. Abundance of people ran back into the house. The fire kindled and ran from heart to heart, till few, if any, were unaffected. Is not this a new thing in the earth? God begins his work in children. Thus it has been also in Cornwall, Manchester, and Epworth. Thus the flame spreads to those of riper years; till at length they all know him and praise him, from the least unto the greatest.<sup>8</sup>

Dr. Hurst, in his *History of Methodism*, tells us:

The rapid growth of the Sunday school system during the last twenty years of his life filled Wesley's heart with hope for the salvation of the world. There had been Sunday schools, here and there, for over a century. Joseph Alleine, the friend and fellow-sufferer of Wesley's Non-conforming grandfather, had conducted one at Bath until he was stopped by the bishop. In the early part of the eighteenth century Mrs. Boevey, the "perverse widow," alluded to in the *Spectator*, gathered the children of the Forest of Dean together and taught them in her own hall. Wesley himself had formed Sunday schools in Georgia, and had taught in the one at Savannah as early as 1736. But the spread of the Revival created a new interest in child-life, and before the Sunday

<sup>6</sup> Wardle, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Hurst, *The History of Methodism* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1902), III, 993.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 993-94.

school became a recognized institution in the Churches of England earnest Methodists were at work in several places.

In 1769, eleven years before the famous Robert Raikes formed his school in Gloucester, Hannah Ball commenced one at High Wycombe, and sent an account of it to Wesley. "The children meet twice a week, on Sunday and Monday. They are a wild little company, but seem willing to be instructed. I labor among them earnestly, desiring to promote the interest of the Church of Christ." . . .

The first teachers in Raikes's school were paid. At the close of the century hard times set in, funds declined, and, even in Gloucester, in a few years the schools died out. The high distinction of commencing the gratuitous system belongs to the Methodist operatives of Oldham. "Lads," said their class leader, Mr. Scholes, "let us do it ourselves; we must all come and try what we can do; and if you'll do so, we can have a Sunday school." The bright idea spread throughout Methodism, and the year before his death, after Wesley had preached at Newcastle to six or seven hundred children, he wrote: "None of our masters or mistresses teach for pay; they seek a reward that men cannot give."\*

As the Sunday schools multiplied it was not long before the question arose as to the major motive of the movement and the core of its teaching materials. Let us keep in mind the fact that this was a movement sponsored largely by laymen. It was also, for the most part, nondenominational. Its early efforts were in the direction of rescuing juvenile delinquents from their physical and moral plight. The early Sunday schools made a sincere approach toward dealing with the problems of illiteracy, disease, hunger, and other phases of poverty and delinquency. It is true that some schools held classes in church buildings, that children were taken to public worship services, and that there was some use of the Bible and Christian hymns. But these schools also taught reading and writing. These were "secular" studies, as many thought, and should not be allowed to go on in a church building on the Sabbath day. The laymen who sponsored the movement found little cogency in such arguments. Between suspicion on one side and impatience on the other, a division came about which did much to hinder the movement's progress. However, the Methodists gave their support to the Sunday school,

\* *Ibid.*, 994, 998.

though at times there were protests. Dr. Wardle tell us that the Conference of 1823 "unanimously passed this decisive word":

We must advise all our friends . . . to discountenance the plan of teaching the *art of writing on the Lord's Day*, to the children of Sunday schools, as one which has an injurious effect both on teachers and scholars . . . and, being wholly secular in the direct object and tendency, is, in our judgment, an unjustifiable infringement on the sanctity of the Sabbath.<sup>10</sup>

At the Conference of 1827 rules were drawn up and adopted:

That Sunday schools should be *strictly and entirely religious* institutions. That these schools designed for the religious education of poor children ought to be conducted in distinct and avowed connexion with some particular branch of the visible *Church of Christ*. That Sunday schools should be so conducted as not to interfere with public worship. That the bustle and secularity of mere school business should be as much as possible avoided and the spiritual object kept in mind. . . .

With the placing of the responsibility for leadership upon the pastors the problems relative to divisional differences were not at an end. It was difficult to get the leadership and final authority transferred from benevolent individuals, who were often young and impulsive, to the pastor of the church, and still more difficult at times to enforce the Methodist standard of *religious* education *only* in Sunday schools that had in them influences of denominations of other ideals and plans.<sup>11</sup>

As we have seen, the Methodists in Great Britain seemed at times not to know just what to do with this new agency. At the same time they had too much foresight to reject or even to leave it to its own devices. As they worked to make of the Sunday school a worthy part of their teaching program, they found it a problem. Anything that is alive can bring problems upon those who use it, whether it be a child or a vital religious organization. The Sunday school was no exception. However, Wesley and brave leaders like him also found in it a promise. They had enough of the spirit of the pioneer to deal experimentally with this agency. There might be something of great value to the church. They proved to be right.

<sup>10</sup> From Minutes of the Methodist Conference, Vol. V. Cited in Wardle, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> Wardle, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30, 33.



To follow the developments of the Sunday school among the Methodists of Great Britain would provide us with a significant and gripping story. However, the scope of the writer's purpose compels him to turn to certain developments taking place in the American colonies. Was the Sunday school to prove to them to be a problem, or a promise—or both? Let us see.

## 5—THE COLONISTS CONSIDER THE CHILD

Before Sunday schools came to America thorough and positive plans for religious teaching were in operation. The colonists had ventured into a new continent because, in part, they hoped to enjoy the blessing of freedom in religion. It was natural that they would overemphasize the peculiar beliefs and practices which had been forbidden them. They drew more rigidly the lines of instruction in matters pertaining to the human spirit. They emphasized the theological catechisms and other instruments by which the young were to be instructed. The lips of children were taught to repeat current affirmations of total depravity and kindred themes. Surely, the reader is familiar with the old picture alphabet in which each of the letters was illustrated to teach some certain doctrine. For example, the letter "A" was interpreted by the rhyme,

In Adam's Fall  
We sinned all.

Other teaching materials in use were *The Horn Book*, a paddle with the Lord's prayer written on the side which the teacher did not use for corporal punishment; *The Alphabet of Lessons for Youth*, abounding in moral precepts taken mostly from the Bible; *The Westminster Catechism*; and Webster's "Blue-back Speller." Looking back upon his childhood experience in a strict and pious home, the writer recalls how he was made to master this spelling book filled with maxims of conduct and ominous references to religion. In the colonies religious teaching was not necessarily

limited to the Sabbath; it went on in many places as a part of the life of the home and in the community school.

Outside New England the German Lutherans, French Huguenots, Dutch Calvinists, and Quakers were devoting themselves with similar determination to transmitting to the coming generations their particular religious tenets. In America, though there was no generally established church with its fixed and enforced teachings, there were varieties of functional unity of church and state within most of the colonies. Certainly in a very real sense there was little, if any, separation of church and state in the field of religious teaching.

*The New England Primer* succeeded the earlier forms of teaching in that region. In fact, it included in one volume much material previously used. The *Primer* contained the alphabet with rhymes and various other pious statements considered of particular importance for children. Then followed the Lord's Prayer, Creed, Ten Commandments, and verses from the Bible with their moral teachings pointed out. The final section of the *Primer* was made up of the "Shorter Catechism," with both questions and answers to be memorized—in fact, children memorized the *Primer*. Parents quizzed them on it, school teachers emphasized it, and preachers sermonized from it—such was the degree of doctrinal saturation reached.

As Lewis Sherrill has pointed out in his *Rise of Christian Education*,

Once a tangent is taken in the course of historical development, veering off decisively in a certain direction, then along that tangential line a new cumulative process begins and continues, not checked by sufficient corrective factors within itself, but piling up more and more results of a kind peculiar to itself until at last the unwieldy product collapses in some manner by its own weight.<sup>1</sup>

The American Revolution was not the only factor which brought about a change in the close relation of religious teaching in the church and home to that carried on by the community. The ingrown nature of the educational process became unbearable. There was general loss of interest in formalized religious activities. As pressure developed to free the day schools from ecclesias-

<sup>1</sup>(New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944), p. 300.

tical control, the churches came to realize that Sunday remained as their own unchallenged period for teaching religion; and also that the Sunday school, an agency to which they had given little consideration, might serve an important purpose. Dr. Trumbull may have had this in mind when he said: "America has been practically saved to Christianity and the religion of the Bible by the Sunday school." Many of the churches were slow to realize the value of the instrument they had at hand. Certain rigid attitudes, dominant in the old countries, asserted themselves. The Sunday school was still viewed by some as a rival of the regular teaching procedures set up by the churches. This was not, however, generally true of the American Methodists. Sunday schools put in their appearance along the Atlantic seaboard just before the Methodist Conference met in Charleston in 1790. The Conference gave the new movement its approval. In the 1796 edition of the Methodist *Discipline* we find this exhortation by Bishop Asbury and Bishop Coke:

Let us labor among the poor in this respect, as well as among the competent. O, if our people in the cities, towns and villages were but sufficiently sensible to the magnitude of this duty, and its acceptableness to God—if they would establish Sabbath schools wherever practicable for the benefit of the children of the poor and sacrifice a few public ordinances every Lord's Day in this charitable and useful exercise, God would be to them instead of all the money they lose.

E. Morris Fergusson tells us of the first American Sunday school of which we have a record:

The earliest appearance of the Sunday School in Virginia was clearly due to the Wesleyan evangelical movement. In 1785 a Methodist, William Elliott, on his plantation in Accomac County on the Eastern Shore, started a Sunday School for the white boys and girls in his charge and for his own children, with like provision for his negro slaves. Neighboring children were soon added. "All were taught the rudiments of reading, in order that they might be able to read God's Word for themselves," and also the Methodist Catechism. When a church was organized in the vicinity the school was continued under its care; and it survives to this day.

Francis Asbury, sent over by Wesley in 1771, was made bishop or superintendent of the Methodists in 1784. In 1786, in Hanover County, Virginia, he organized a Sunday School in the house of Thomas Cren-



shaw. The General Conference of 1790, no doubt at his insistence, enjoined the establishing of Sunday Schools.<sup>2</sup>

The Sunday schools which sprang up in Philadelphia had the stamp of Robert Raikes upon them. An Episcopal rector had gone to England to be consecrated a bishop, and while there, he observed the work being done by those following the plan of Robert Raikes. When he returned as Bishop William White he undertook the organization of a group to set up schools in Philadelphia on the Raikes plan. Some of those who joined Bishop White in this effort were Dr. Benjamin Rush, a Universalist; Matthew Carey, a Roman Catholic; and two Quakers, Joe Sharpless and Thomas B. Cole. On December 19, 1790, the first First Day or Sunday School Society was organized under their sponsorship.

Rooms were promptly secured in various parts of the city, masters employed, and schools begun. Sessions were held on Sunday for about five hours, before worship in the morning and after worship in the afternoon, with frequent visits in a body to some near-by church service. Much of the instruction was moral and religious, with reading lessons from the Bible; and some of the teachers served without pay.<sup>3</sup>

In Boston and in New York, schools somewhat similar came into being. A striking account is given of how one of the Sunday schools was begun. It seems that:

In 1793 a poor African woman, Katy Ferguson, knowing nothing of Raikes or of the Sunday schools elsewhere, established one . . . in New York City, for the benefit of the poor street children of the humble quarter in which she lived.<sup>4</sup>

In this connection one recalls the words of Paul given us in the King James Version of I Cor. 16:9: "A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." Years passed before there seemed to be any real decline in the misgivings and even suspicion held by religious leaders concerning the new movement. Dr. Fergusson tells us that the Sunday schools

<sup>2</sup> *Historic Chapters in Christian Education in America* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1935), pp. 15-16.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15. Quoted from H. C. Trumbull, *Yale Lectures on the Sunday School*, p. 123.

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were definitely on the defensive, particularly as to their scriptural authorization and practical usefulness:

Thirty years ago an elderly friend in Trenton, New Jersey, told me with solemn finality: "My old pastor in Scotland used to say that there was two things that had na warrant in the Word o' God; one of them was the Sabbath-schule, and the other was Temperance!"<sup>5</sup>

There were situations in which the Methodists were violently opposed to Sunday schools. This is revealed in the First Annual Report of the Methodist Sunday School Union. After pointing out that many schools had been put into operation, the report went on to say:

It will not be denied that these schools were established several years before any other denomination participated in our labors or shared our reproach. For about this time there were persecutions instituted against the brethren engaged in these schools which might damp the ardor of most of our modern teachers. By a letter lately received from the Rev. Stith Mead, an old veteran of the cross, now laboring within the bounds of the Virginia Conference, we learn that not long after, the Rev. George Daughaday, stationed preacher at Charleston S.C., was severely beaten on the head with a club, and subsequently had water pumped on him from a public cistern, for the crime of conducting a Sabbath school for the benefit of the African children of that vicinity.<sup>6</sup>

Some also felt a growing concern for what appeared to be the element of secularism in the new movement.

What teaching materials were used in these early American Sunday schools?

To a considerable degree the same materials were used in the colonies as had been in use in the old countries. However, John Cotton published a catechism which gained much popularity. It bore the vivid title of *Milk for Babes, Drawn Out of the Breasts of Both Testaments, Chiefly for the Spiritual Nourishment of Boston Babes . . . But May Be of Like Use for Any Children. The New England Primer*, already mentioned, was in use along with various catechisms and confessions.

Illiteracy in America rivaled that in the old countries. This

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Wardle, *op. cit.*, pp. 47. Extract of First Annual Report; *Methodist Magazine* (American), 1828, pp. 349-53.

fact acted as a force to hold the Sunday school to its early purpose of teaching reading and writing. In many situations there were Sunday classes for those who were learning the alphabet and the use of short and simple words. Those who had learned to read in a stumbling fashion made up other classes. The most advanced groups were composed of those who could read certain parts of the New Testament with some degree of facility. Many young people and adults, as well as children, were members of these classes. Edwin Rice tells us:

The supplies used in the Sunday schools were the alphabet on cards and a simple spelling book especially prepared for the Sunday-school which contained also reading lessons; all the sentences being taken from some portion of Holy Scripture while the "spelling lessons" were words taken from the same portions of the Scripture. . . .

The system of rewards and punishments of those early schools was also interesting. They were quite varied, but the following was a general system which prevailed for nearly a decade in the early part of the last [eighteenth] century. Tickets, with passages of Scripture printed with a border on thin red and blue pasteboard, were used for rewards. In the highest classes no reward was given except for good recitations—a blue ticket being given for every six verses of Scripture memorized and recited, and the same for every page of catechism. In the next grade a blue ticket was given to each scholar who was present at the roll-call, and for every hymn recited, a similar ticket. In the beginners' classes a blue ticket was given for punctual attendance and for good behavior also. Six of these blue tickets were equal to one red ticket, and one red ticket was counted half a cent in value, to be redeemed every three months with religious books and tracts suited to the capacity of the child. . . . On the other hand there were penalties as well as rewards [including the forfeiting of tickets]. . . .

From the earliest time of the new movement, the teachers were enjoined to spend a definite portion of the session giving oral religious instruction in talks, in lectures and by personal appeals to the learners. Hence, the first mode of instruction in the Sunday-schools in America, as abroad, was largely oral, and closely allied to what was later termed "the lecture system." <sup>7</sup>

Before the ability to read became widespread, such verbalizing had to be relied on. It became so deeply rooted in religious as well

<sup>7</sup> Edwin Wilbur Rice, *The Sunday-School Movement and the American Sunday-School Union* (Philadelphia: The Union Press, 1917), pp. 74 ff.



as secular instruction as to prove an obstacle to efforts to attain more vital ways of teaching. We see the somber element of discipline fittingly related to the rigid concepts of theology then dominant. The counterpart of punishment as a motivating agent was the withholding of rewards. In a New World setting the procedures were little changed. Only the industrialization of the nation was needed to bring many early Sunday schools into the old Raikes pattern of dealing in considerable part with illiteracy and delinquency. In England the idea of this agency's being a kind of "pauper school" continued. In America changes were to take place which were to leave only an occasional vestige of such a point of view and purpose. Nor must we refuse to overlook the early indications of the coming struggle between churchmen and those who felt that the Sunday school would fare better at the hands of more or less independent sponsors.

When America was very young, the Methodist movement was looked upon in some quarters as heretical in doctrine and unsafe in its methods of work. This tended to place Methodist leaders on the defensive. Besides, the Methodist movement had few leaders with thorough educational training. These two facts may explain why catechisms brought from England were kept in use in our Methodist schools. There were three of these catechisms:

NUMBER I . . . FOR CHILDREN OF TENDER YEARS. This catechism was intended for children under seven years of age. It is divided into five sections, as follows: 1. God, 2. The Creation of Man, 3. The Fall of Man, 4. The Redemption of Man, 5. Heaven and Hell.

NUMBER II . . . FOR CHILDREN OF SEVEN YEARS AND UPWARDS. In this catechism the principles of the first catechism are enlarged; and Scripture proofs are placed under the answers, where they can receive appropriate illustration from the Word of God. Nine sections are found in this catechism, as follows: 1. Of God, 2. Of the Creation of Man, 3. Of the Fall of Man, 4. Of the Redemption of the World Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, 5. Of the Holy Ghost, 6. Of the Law of God, 7. Of the Sacraments, 8. Of the Word of God and Prayer, and 9. Of Death and Judgment. . . .

NUMBER III. FOR THE USE OF YOUNG PERSONS. The third and last in the series of Wesleyan catechisms deals with the evidences of Christianity and the truth of the Holy Scriptures. The strictly catechetical method shifts somewhat in this booklet to the form of a dialogue between a youth and his teacher. Youth asks the questions and the teacher answers them. . . . The catechism is divided into six

chapters: 1. Definitions and Explanation, 2. A Revelation from God Highly Probable and Necessary, 3. The Evidence by Which A Revelation May be Satisfactorily Proved to be Divine, 4. The Antiquity, Genuineness and Authenticity of the Books of Scripture, 5. Objections answered. This catechism was really a treatise of Christian doctrine for the use of young people.<sup>8</sup>

The Protestant colonists have considered the child. Some are afraid of efforts to give the young a chance to grow and learn the Christian life. Others remain blind to the whole matter of Christian nurture. In certain places there is an unhealthy unity of church and community. Religious learning is motivated in large measure by the use of rewards and punishments. Few changes have taken place in the religious curriculum.

In our next chapter we take note of the approaching struggle between the dogmatic catechism and the Holy Scriptures.

## 6—CATECHISM AND BIBLE

Mention has already been made of the organization of the First Day Society in Philadelphia, one of the very first of the societies set up to promote the spread of the Sunday school. In addition to the alphabet, word lists, spelling books, primers, and Bible sentences, which were used in the schools under its direction, other books or booklets were either given as prizes or made available to the pupils apart from the winning of contests. Some of these were *Fruits of Creation*, *Power of Religion*, *Bible and Testament*, *The Whole Duty of Woman*, *Watts' Songs*, *Fruits of the Father's Love*, *Catechism of Nature*, *Barbauld's Songs*, *Dealey's Fables*, and *Economy of Human Life*.<sup>1</sup> In the production and distribution of such books we see some of the early efforts of those at work in the Sunday-school movement to provide what

<sup>8</sup> F. G. Lankard, *A History of the American Sunday School Curriculum* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1927), pp. 93 ff.

<sup>1</sup> See Lankard, *op. cit.*, pp. 63 ff.

might be called "enrichment reading" for use along with the curriculum used in classes.

As he was getting his Sunday schools under way, Robert Raikes issued a little book to which he gave the unusual title of *Redinmadesy*. One has to pronounce the syllables slowly to catch the meaning. It was an effort to help the illiterates in his schools to master their letters. The method used was to simplify words and shorten sentences. A similar effort has been attempted from time to time by using words of few syllables and changing the structure of sentences so that the more intricate concepts of theology could be made easy and poured into the memories of the young, and also so that there could be an automatic carry-over from a memory crammed with such statements into the learner's conduct and life. Through the years the Roman Church chose and presented Bible teachings in the form of catechisms and confessions. The Protestants set up the same procedure in order to present the portions of the scriptures which they found most significant. Thus one set of scripture teaching was set over against another. In opposing certain dogmas of the Romanists, dogmatic teachings of Protestantism were made a part of the instruction of the churches. It was easy to give peculiar emphasis to doctrine in the catechisms and neglect the teaching of the Bible. In some Sunday schools in America doctrinal catechisms tended to push the Bible itself to one side. The time was approaching when the very Protestants who were committed powerfully and deeply to the Scriptures were hammering so continuously upon doctrine as to allow the Bible itself to assume a secondary place in the Sunday school.

But before we proceed further in giving the story of the development of teaching materials, we should say something about the trend in America toward rejecting the assumption that the Sunday schools existed only to serve the very poor or delinquent. It has been pointed out that at first the tendency in the colonies was to perpetuate what had prevailed in England. There the Sunday school was looked upon by some as a condescending outreach of the church to help the unfortunate. The so-called "best people" were not expected to send their children to classes there. Such a concept was not congenial to the feelings in the colonies. We are not surprised to find early efforts to place the Sunday school in a different light. In his book, *The Sabbath-*



*School Index*, R. G. Pardee tells us that this matter weighed heavily on the conscience of Henry Ward Beecher. In an interview the great preacher said:

I saw the tendency of things, and feared that our Sunday-schools would result in a failure if only the poor children gained the benefit of them in this land. . . . At last I resolved to overthrow that system, and went and called on Judge W., one of my most influential families, and said, "Judge W—, I want you to bring your children to Sunday-school next Sabbath." "Me," exclaimed the Judge in amazement. "Yes, you . . . I have made up my mind to take *my children*, and I want you and a few others of the best families to popularize the thing."

It seems that Dr. Beecher won his point when he called on Mrs. S—, an aristocratic lady in his congregation. After some urging she agreed to bring her two daughters to Sunday school on the following Sabbath. The same agreement was secured from a leading physician. Dr. Beecher concluded:

We all turned our labor and influence on the Sunday-school movement, and it gave an unheard-of impetus to our Sunday-school, and by means of the press and by letters and personal conversation the facts became known and met with almost universal approval and adoption in our country.<sup>2</sup>

Doubtless efforts of many concerned persons exerted real influence in this direction. Other factors also affected the situation, such as the rapidly changing social and political situation, and helped to free the Sunday school from the onus which had threatened to take hold of it permanently.

But back to our consideration of the struggle between the use of the Bible and the use of the doctrinal catechism. The reaction from the tendency to neglect Bible study in favor of the catechism led to an almost hysterical emphasis upon the memorization of scripture passages. We are told that sometimes the pupils selected without any supervision the passages for study. Usually the method of selection was haphazard. Such a development did not improve the situation. At least the catechism provided some logical arrangement of content founded on a clear purpose.

<sup>2</sup> R. G. Pardee, *The Sabbath-School Index* (Philadelphia: J. C. Garrigues & Co., 1868), pp. 18-19.

Mr. Pardee, from whose book we have just quoted, comments upon this overemphasis upon memorization:

For awhile *Memory* was crowded to its utmost extent, to the injury of the scholar, and mere memorizing became the hobby in most of our schools. After awhile the physicians checked this by telling us that by crowding the memory we were developing a new disease amongst children, viz., Hydrocephalus, or water on the brain. Then our schools were in trouble, and resort was had to question-cards and finally question-books became the hobby. In a few years question-books began to be stale and monotonous, and we appealed to the imagination and resorted to stories and anecdotes until they wearied, and then we searched commentaries, and theology was administered to the children in large doses. After that what was called spiritual teaching was adopted, but that soon degenerated into mere exhortation. Now we find that we must comprehensively grasp and rightly use them all, and make a hobby of none.<sup>3</sup>

From these comments we gain the impression that it was not easy to shake off the hold that memorizing Bible passages had upon the teaching that went on in our early American Sunday schools.

In an address delivered before the Eleventh International Sunday School Convention, Charles G. Trumbull was more critical of this practice and concerned over its possible effects. He says:

The first quarter of the [nineteenth] century was characterized by great attention to rote memorizing of long passages of Scripture and catechism. One historian notes that it was common for pupils to learn three hundred or more verses a week. A formal protest against this in America came in 1826, when the Sunday-School Union reported "manifest improvements in the mode of conducting Sunday-schools in America and Great Britain," one improvement being "the limitation of Scripture lessons and the allotment of the same lesson to the class or classes." And the report went on, with sound sense, to say that, though pleased with the diligence shown in committing many passages to memory, the number of verses recited was no unequivocal evidence of the advancement of pupils in divine knowledge; and it therefore recommended to teachers that they discourage the reciting of Scripture lessons by rote merely in order to repeat great numbers of verses, and endeavor

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

to make scholars understand and apply to themselves the truth of revelation. Yet when a clear-headed educator a few years ago warned teachers against children's parrot-memorizing of the Bible, he was branded as an enemy of our fathers' blessed practices.<sup>4</sup>

How strongly this reminds some of us with recent editorial experience of the violent attacks made when we heeded this warning!

However, as we consider this situation over a century later it is well to note that there were factors at work which made the emphasis upon memorization partly justifiable. Discipline and Christian instruction were closely linked. Authority was the rule in the classroom, and the submission of pupils was its counterpart. The concept of total depravity fitted into the situation and made any effort to bring about pupil satisfaction in learning seem to be a sin. The Bible is an adult-centered book. It is difficult to grade its teachings so as to make them meaningful to those who have not reached maturity. Besides, the development of helps for teachers was yet to come. Because of these factors it does not behoove educators today to pass harsh judgment upon what Sunday-school workers were doing at that time.

When the craze for memorization reached the point at which all the class time was consumed by the reciting of Bible passages, often indiscriminately selected, class instruction itself was eliminated. The pupils who did not hold the stage while others were reciting Bible passages were dissatisfied. Teachers were frustrated in their work. It is not surprising to find that leaders in the Sunday-school movement attacked the problem with vigor. We are told by Dr. Lankard that:

In the year 1820, S. C. Goodrich published a book of questions on the Bible covering both the Old and New Testaments, planned especially for the use of young persons. . . .

In 1823, William B. Fowle published a book of Scripture lessons which consisted of selections from the Old and New Testaments, and contained neither questions nor answers. . . . Part II introduces a unique feature. Here the author chooses what he considers to be the representative duties toward God and man and then proceeds to select portions from

<sup>4</sup> From an address by Charles G. Trumbull, entitled, "The Nineteenth Century Sunday School." Published in the *Official Report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention*, 1905, pp. 10-11.



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both Testaments that give the biblical viewpoint on these relationships. . . .

In the year 1823 Mr. Truman Parmele . . . published for the use of Sunday-school teachers a small volume containing a series of simple questions on the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>5</sup>

Arlo A. Brown gives us a description of a Sunday school in 1817, reported, many years later, as a member of that school was able to recall his experiences as a pupil. This report was published in the *Sunday School Journal*, December, 1865. We give here some of the items of information furnished by the writer himself:

Though not an old man, the writer's recollection embraces a period of nearly fifty years. . . . He was so long ago a scholar in a school which possessed nearly everything we have in our schools today. . . .

The school was organized into classes and had its superintendent, secretary, and librarians—with this improvement over modern schools: each class had two instructors, namely, a teacher and an assistant teacher, the latter quite a youth, generally, and a candidate for the office of teacher. . . .

It had its Bible class under the name of "Monitors' Class," composed of the senior scholars, from among whom assistant teachers were selected.

The school had a series of catechetical textbooks, beginning with the "Milk for Babes," and ending with advanced work in Christian doctrines, the scholars graduating from class to class as rapidly as they mastered the textbooks.

The school had a library of several hundred volumes. It also had its periodicals and reward books. . . .

The children were all taken to church in the morning and had a religious service, with an appropriate address after the hour for instruction in the afternoon.<sup>6</sup>

In the school which has been described we see signs of concern for progress, as well as efforts to make use of various types of materials. Edwin Wilbur Rice tells us:

Lewis Baldwin [of Philadelphia] . . . conceived [a plan] for imparting religious instruction on non-sectarian lines . . . prepared and

<sup>5</sup> Lankard, *op. cit.*, pp. 138 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Arlo A. Brown, *A History of Religious Education in Recent Times* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1923), pp. 43-44.

published, in 1816, *The Biblical Interrogatory*, or questions explanatory of sacred history, prophecy, etc., covering the most interesting portions of the Old and the New Testaments. . . . His questions were printed without answers, but references to Scripture are given after each question to aid the teacher and scholar in finding the answer. . . . About the same time *Lessons for Bible Classes* were prepared by the Rev. Dr. John McDowell . . . for advanced Bible classes. . . .

To exclude the unprofitable plan of committing large portions of Scripture to memory without religious instruction, a system providing a lesson of from ten to twenty Bible verses to be used by all the schools was conceived and tried by several, but notably by two of the schools connected with the New York Sunday-School Union Society. This *Limited Lesson System* commended itself at once to the best Sunday-school workers in New York, and was speedily introduced into most of their schools. . . . A list of the lessons, with the dates on which they were to be studied, was provided, so that the absent scholars might learn the lesson in course.<sup>7</sup>

Truman Parmelee had prepared:

a list of selected lessons from the four Gospels and Acts, in 1823, and issued helps upon them. The questions were few—some calling for thoughtful study in addition to memorizing the lesson. His work was named *Questions on the Historical Parts of the New Testament*.<sup>8</sup>

A somewhat different experiment, also reported by Dr. Rice, was carried on about the same time:

S. W. Seton . . . and William A. Tomlinson, of New York arranged a scheme of lessons, *without questions*, for general use in all the classes of their schools. . . . Their system is thus described: "They have arranged select portions of Scripture for every Sabbath in the year, comprising from ten to twenty verses each, one of which portions is announced each Sabbath to the whole School and all are engaged the following Sabbath in receiving instructions from the *same lessons*. Each scholar is supplied with a printed card containing the selection, the lessons [being] numbered in order. The scholars are required to read the portion during the week and after receiving instruction in it, to commit it for recitation. . . . These lessons are chronologically arranged, so as to embrace all the leading incidents of the gospel in due order."

<sup>7</sup> Rice, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

## CHILD AND CHURCH

The pastors gave a weekly lecture to the teachers on the lesson for each Sabbath. It was also the topic at the monthly concert.<sup>9</sup>

The struggle between catechism and scripture proved such a hindrance to progress in good teaching that Sunday-school leaders began to cast about to find better ways of developing and using lessons. Such experimentation was important. It opened the way for real improvement in the Sunday-school curriculum. The critical situation in which the leaders found themselves also drew them together.

### 7—WORKING TOGETHER ON LESSON MATERIALS

One is impressed, as he looks into the developments of the early decades of the nineteenth century, with the determined efforts of persons with a concern for the Sunday school to improve its lesson materials. We have noted the factors that contributed to the use of catechisms and the unusual emphasis upon the memorization of passages from the Scriptures; we have also seen how the catechism gained ascendancy over the Bible at certain times. It would have been surprising to find that no mistakes were made. Those of us coming after these early workers inherited both the gains and losses which they had brought about, as we shall see.

It was in a period of experimentation and confusion that the American Sunday-School Union was formed in 1824. Since this organization was the successor of the Sunday and Adult Sunday-School Union, with headquarters in Philadelphia, that city became the headquarters of the new agency. It was run by Christian laymen of various churches who declared:

We can maintain the integrity of our relations to the respective

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104-5.



churches and communities, while we can unite to teach the truth that Christ taught and as plainly as he taught it.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Rice goes on to tell us:

The Union proposed to make definite advances along three related lines:

(1) Educational: by providing a system of lessons, a decidedly religious juvenile literature, a complete equipment for the school, and definite information upon principles and methods of teaching.

(2) Organization: by promoting teachers' meetings in the local school, by forming county and state unions among schools and teachers for inspiration, counsel, and mutual improvement.

(3) Extension of Sunday-schools: by employing general agents and missionaries and providing a medium of communication for and between all Sunday-school workers.<sup>2</sup>

The most impressive record of the new organization was made in the area of Sunday-school extension. It accomplished a great deal as a missionary agency working in unoccupied areas during the time of the westward movement of our population. The organ of this agency was *The American Sunday-School Magazine*. Soon *The Sunday-School Repository* was issued as a magazine for officers and teachers. This made it possible for these workers to exchange views and plans related to their work. *The Youth's Friend* was a home periodical with illustrations and reading matter for boys and girls.

One is impressed with the interest which these pioneers manifested in what we call today "cultural, or pleasure, reading material" for the home and Sunday school. The American Sunday-School Union had a Committee on Publication. In one of its reports we find the regretful observation:

that improper books are too generally placed in the hands of youth—books abounding with foolishness, vulgarity, and falsehood, or otherwise deficient in relation to their moral influence.<sup>3</sup>

The committee was also desirous:

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

not only of furnishing their own schools with suitable books; but of introducing such books into schools, of different description, and rendering them so abundant as to force out of circulation those which tend to mislead the mind and to fill it with what must be injurious to it in subsequent life.<sup>4</sup>

The members of the committee regarded this "of importance equalled only by the value of character in this world and the soul's everlasting welfare in the next."<sup>5</sup> For this reason they set out "to increase the number and size and to elevate the character of their publications."<sup>6</sup>

It called for prophetic ability for these leaders to sense so early the fact that dominant imagery is one of the main factors determining the direction of the course of civilization and also that here the school of the church has a stake.

The American Sunday-School Union also attempted to straighten out the tangled and confused situation in the field of lesson materials. In 1825 it

printed a list of selected lessons for one year in card form, which comprised studies on the life of Christ. . . . The list numbered the lessons, cited the passages of Scripture (not printing the text), and gave a title to each lesson. The lists were divided into four parts, one for each quarter of the year, and printed *without question, note, or comment*. This first annual list comprised forty-nine lessons, the other Sabbaths being given to the quarterly examination of the scholars.<sup>7</sup>

Since no Scripture was printed in the lessons, pupils and teachers had to use their Bibles to find the references. Today some of us feel that it would have been a good thing to continue this practice. In all too many of our classes we find little handling of the Bible itself since the quarterlies carry the passages to be used. We also note in these reports the first formulation of the principle of quarterly divisions in the lessons. Such a practice has made for considerable difficulty as the years passed. The American Sunday-School Union developed a series of limited, or selected, lessons built on the principle of uniformity. We must

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

remember that this was a pioneering effort at lesson-making and that the materials produced proved to be experimental.

The Union also proceeded to prepare lesson topics for every Sunday in the year. This proved to be an exciting development. It was inspiring to realize that all over the nation Sunday schools were using the same lessons. It also became possible for Sunday-school leaders to make more or less creative use of the outlines. Albert Judson, a fieldworker for the Union, proposed a set of questions to go with the lesson topics. The manual for the first year covered two hundred pages. Judson's next manual was equal in length. In order to adapt uniform materials to what he thought were the needs and capacities of pupils of different ages, Judson provided three "grades" of questions:

The first was designed to be plain and easy; the second of less simplicity, requiring more thought and leading the teacher and his pupil to inquire into the meaning of the text; the third was still more difficult and general in scope, extending to passages in different parts of the Bible bearing upon the same subject. Interspersed with these were questions relating to the geography, customs, and oriental coloring of the medium through which the truth was presented. At the end of the volume were plans and suggestions upon conducting public examinations of the scholars at the end of each quarter, and an "Address to Teachers" on their duties, and urging fidelity therein.\*

Here we see a forerunner of the volumes of notes and teaching suggestions on the Sunday-school lessons which were to become widely popular.

In response to a widespread demand *The American Sunday-School Magazine* began to carry helps on the lessons with explanations, exegeses, illustrations, and ways of "applying" the factual truth imparted. The Union also sponsored the publication of lesson helps based on a series of lessons prepared by James Gall of Scotland.

These comprised a five-fold form of treatment of each lesson text; that is, teachers' helps in the five distinct forms of (1) narrative, (2) questions, (3) explanations, (4) symbols, and (5) practical lessons.<sup>9</sup>

\* *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 110-11.



The use of such material called for other background information. Soon *Nevin's Jewish [Biblical] Antiquities* was published. The Union also brought out its own *Bible Dictionary*.

A lesson committee set up by the American Sunday-School Union developed the *Five-Year Cycle* of uniform lessons. In a short while the *Union Questions* were prepared for teachers to use with the lessons of this cycle. Its sponsors claimed certain values for this system of teaching material:

(1) It distinctly proposed to displace the earlier schemes which overlapped one another, such as alphabetic, spelling and reading, memorizing and "parrot recitation," the "story plan," and the lecture form of instruction as well as all other "Babel" systems of lessons; (2) It was a system of study comprehending the Bible—it first included five annual courses of lessons and then was extended to seven and nine, and finally eleven years of study; (3) It especially provided for reviews—weekly, monthly and quarterly. It also provided for public examinations before crowded assemblies. It gave an opportunity for definite instruction upon the various doctrines peculiar to each denomination of Christians; (4) it was intended for national use, being recommended by ministers and leading educators in different denominations, and its universal adoption was expected, and practically attained; (5) it called forth and was accompanied by numerous graded helps.<sup>10</sup>

Another publishing venture of the Union was *The Consecutive Union Questions*. It represented further advance in the construction of study materials:

Instead of taking the events and the instructions recorded in the several Gospels as so many distinct and independent subjects of instruction, it is proposed to take each Gospel by itself and, following the order of events as they stand in the history, divide the text into lessons of suitable length and frame opportune questions thereon. By this system the whole gospel narrative may be brought into view at once, and it gives a complete history of Christ and of his miracles and teachings as given by each of the Gospels.<sup>11</sup>

Within a few years the Union published a *Primer* for beginners. This led to the publication of the *Child's Question Book*.

About 1831 the *Verse-a-Day Plan* of Bible study, borrowed

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>11</sup> Lankard, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

from the Moravians, came into rather wide use. The materials based on this plan appeared in the *Verse Herald*. Within a year this publication was succeeded by *The Daily Verse Expositor*. The plan proved popular enough to displace, in a considerable number of schools, the *Selected Lessons* sponsored by the American Sunday-School Union. The new plan of Bible study started a movement back toward more or less unsupervised Bible memorization, a practice opposed by organized Sunday-school leaders. As was to be expected, this caused confusion.

The period from 1830 to 1872 has been called the "Babel Period" in the history of the curriculum of the Sunday school. The American Sunday-School Union made considerable progress in its efforts to develop a generally used and co-operatively planned system of lessons. But many factors were working in the opposite direction. In various sections of the nation independently produced lessons came into use, the "Verse-a-Day" plan being one of them. We shall note later how the Methodists and other denominations came to feel it necessary to produce their own study materials for the Sunday school.

It was during the Babel Period that a prophet of vital Christian teaching appeared upon the scene. Horace Bushnell of Hartford, Connecticut, raised his voice against the mechanical use of the theological catechism and the equally mechanical rote memorization of passages of scripture. He held that such practices were damaging to the Christian growth of the young. His book, *Christian Nurture*, stands as one of the notable achievements of the first half of the nineteenth century. The thesis set forth was that the child was to grow up as a Christian and never think of himself as being cut off from the divine love. As Dr. Bushnell put it:

Therefore we bring them [the children] into the school of Christ and the pale of mercy with us, there to be trained up in the holy nurture of the Lord.<sup>12</sup>

We recall that Count Zinzendorf had the same view. John Wesley was impressed with its validity, but the gross wickedness and black pessimism of the period of Wesley—and after—thrust

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in article on Horace Bushnell in *The Encyclopedia of Sunday Schools and Religious Education*, ed. McFarland and Winchester (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1915), Vol. I.

the claim for the necessity of Christian nurture far toward the margin of Protestant interest.

Bushnell appealed to the teaching of Jesus concerning the status of the child in the Kingdom as the ground of his central proposition. His contention . . . shook New England theology from center to circumference. . . . The book controverted the prevailing method of propagating religious life by emotional mass appeals and periodic revivals. Bushnell denied the doctrine of the total and inherited depravity of man, the doctrine that one must begin religious life with a sense of alienation from God through the guilt of Adam, and that one is a child of divine wrath under the condemnation of God and as such under a sentence of everlasting punishment. Bushnell magnified the grace of God, made much of the Christian family and church as the mediators of religion, and of the principle of the growth and enrichment of human life from childhood to maturity.<sup>18</sup>

One is tempted to wonder what might have happened if the voice of this prophet had become determinative in the work of the Sunday school in America. There was considerable discontent over the materials in use. Experiments were going on in various places. The time seemed to be ripe for a long stride forward in the field of curriculum construction. The Wesleyan revival had called attention to the direct access of the human spirit to the presence of God. It had put songs on the lips of multitudes and made worship more spontaneous. However, the hold of hard-and-fast dogma and *memoriter* use of scripture passages was still too strong. Too many leaders understood Christian experience to be valid only for the mature. The Bible was an adult book; authority rested in the Scriptures as it was handled by adults intent on transmitting chosen passages from printed page to human memory. The immature, being less able to fight through to freedom, were made to submit to the authority which, in theory, rested with the mature and those in places of power.

As a later educator tells us:

Transmissive education, thinking to make men obedient to God, brings some men into subjection to others. The learner, it is hoped, will become conformed to the content, and thus to Jesus and God. But the

<sup>18</sup> From a chapter entitled "Historical Development of Religious Education in America" by Karl Stolz, in *Studies in Religious Education*, ed. P. H. Lotz (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1931), pp. 31-32.



content has been selected and interpreted, and the curriculum organized, not by Jesus nor through infallible inspiration, but by men who are like the learner himself. . . .

Protestantism, assuming that the content of instruction can have authority that is independent of the agent of transmission, confuses the whole teacher-learner relation. When the teacher leans upon the authority of the Scriptures, he really falls back upon the unspecified authority of the men whose opinions gave the Bible its peculiar standing in Protestantism, upon the opinions of those who more recently have determined the interpretation, and finally upon the curriculum-makers and the text-book writers.<sup>14</sup>

Bushnell was asking too much of an adult-minded age with its dim view of childhood and its determination to hold up submission to authority as of prime importance in Christian learning. Decades were to pass before any serious effort was made to put into practice the principle of Christian nurture.

The First National Sunday-School Convention was held in 1832. At that time some consideration was given to the various lesson courses in use. *The Union Primer* was used by teachers of very young children. Children a little older used *The Child Scripture Book*. Young people were given the *Consecutive Series* on the Gospels. The adults used Acts and the epistles as their text-book. It was easy to see that even in the American Sunday-School Union the curriculum was getting complicated.<sup>15</sup>

During the first half of the nineteenth century there was sustained interest in the production of reading material for children and youth. *Pilgrim's Progress* was widely circulated. In some schools the library contained *Cinderella*, *Jack the Giant Killer*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Goody Two Shoes*, *Puss in Boots*, *Blue Beard*, and *Who Killed Cock Robin?* However, in most of the schools more pious stories were to be found. The first book of this kind published by the American Sunday-School Union was the story of *Little Henry and His Bearer*. Hundreds of books of this kind were brought over from England or republished in this country for Sunday-school libraries. The leaders in the Union insisted upon four requirements to govern books which it published. This literature

<sup>14</sup> George Albert Coe, *What Is Christian Education?* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), pp. 55-56.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *The International Lesson Series* by John Richard Sampey (Nashville: Sunday School Board Southern Baptist Convention, 1911), p. 30.

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must be clearly and absolutely of a moral and religious character; *second*, it must be graded; . . . *third*, it must be of a high order of style and fairly good *literature*; and *fourth*, the books should be American and for American children.<sup>16</sup>

It is natural to suppose that these requirements stated an ideal to follow rather than a strict rule of procedure.

The recommendation of the use of fiction caused considerable misgivings. Some leaders took the position that fiction was really untruth. In fact it was based on falsehood. When a child was allowed to read fiction he was being trained to falsify. This mode of thinking prevailed in the writer's home. As a child, like any normal person he craved to read the stories his friends were enjoying. When his school assigned the reading of Sir Walter Scott or James Fenimore Cooper as parallel reading in English, his parents were shocked. But he found places of concealment where he could read many English classics. He even also managed to unlock the shelves of the Sunday-school library which held precious and forbidden volumes. Some predecessor had resisted the ban against fiction, although later the precious volumes were placed under lock and key.

While this interest in reading materials was being manifested, the Babel Period of curriculum construction and use was continuing. Dr. Rice quotes Jean Paul Richter as saying that the Sunday-school materials published during this period were regrettably confused.

They were a jumble equal to those produced by a harlequin on the stage who brought a bundle of orders under one arm, which he delivered, followed by a bundle of *counter-orders* under the other arm.<sup>17</sup>

Churches heretofore indifferent to the Sunday school began to appreciate its importance. Publishing houses were handling requests for Sunday-school materials. The American Sunday-School Union published *The Explanator's and Union Series*. Under the direction of the National Sunday-School Association Edward Eggleston developed *The National Series* and published these lessons in *The National Sunday-School Teacher*. The Pres-

<sup>16</sup> Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294.

byterians published *The Westminster Series*, while the Methodist Episcopal Church had its *Berean Series* well under way. Various independent publishers were also at work in this field. There was little, if any, co-ordination of these efforts. Even within the denominations there was confusion. In the modern day of interdenominational lesson committees and denominational curriculum committees, we find it difficult to gain a true mental picture of the situation in which American Sunday schools worked a century ago.

From the extreme of confusion the denominations reacted in the direction of the opposite extreme. Uniform lessons used everywhere by persons of all ages came to be looked upon as the ideal curriculum. When protagonists of childhood and youth protested against feeding "strong meat" to the very young they were told: "There never was a piece of meat cut for the adult from which could not be made a bowl of broth for the baby."<sup>18</sup>

Edward Eggleston provides one of the clearest statements of the trend of thinking of that day. He said:

One lesson for the school—the same in the Bible classes, the main school and the infant class, but adapted by teachers to the capacities and wants of each, is . . . the foundation of all true advancement. It gives concentration, oneness, heart, life, success. . . . Without a uniform lesson there can be no teachers' meeting; general exercises are impossible; unity of thought in hymns and prayer is out of the question; the moral power of a large number studying the same passage is destroyed. There can be no such thing as an effective school without a uniform lesson of some kind.<sup>19</sup>

When persons are deeply concerned over some educational problem they easily create confusion as they try to correct the situation. Diverse pressures also were being felt in the field of the Sunday school. Efforts to produce teaching and reading materials were sporadic and without co-ordination. Thus the Babel Period came about. This was followed by the extreme reaction in the direction of uniform lessons.

We find that this condition was of great moment to the Methodists.

<sup>18</sup> From the 1905 *Official Report of the International Sunday-School Convention*, p. 155.

<sup>19</sup> Statement by Edward Eggleston. Taken from Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 297.



## 8—METHODISTS CONCERNED WITH CHRISTIAN NURTURE

We have noted the strong movement in the direction of uniform lessons for the Sunday school. Before we trace the further progress of this movement, however, we should give attention to the concern of Methodists in America over the Sunday school and Christian nurture in general.

The difference is striking between the doctrinal position of American Methodism and those of other denominations also at work on the new continent. As has been pointed out, Methodists emphasized the assurance of God's immediate presence in the heart of the believer. They held to the doctrine of universal salvation made possible through faith in Christ and also to the liberating power of faith. The child was considered a proper subject of Christian teaching. In Methodist thinking conversion and Christian growth were not opposed to each other. Christian nurture was a significant part of the church's work with the young. The doctrinal implications of the Christian gospel held by other American denominations stood in opposition to these things cherished by the Methodists. Such opposite views influenced the followers of Wesley. As E. B. Chappell points out:

That these difficulties and adverse influences greatly retarded the adoption of a sound educational theory and policy by American Methodism there can be no serious question. . . . In spite of hindrances, however, there were many influential leaders in early Methodism in America who adopted Wesley's attitude toward childhood and shared his profound interest in Christian education.<sup>1</sup>

This was reflected in questions placed in the first Methodist *Discipline* (1785):

<sup>1</sup> Chappell, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

*Quest.* What shall we do for the rising Generation? Let him who is zealous for God, and the souls of men begin now.

*Answ.* 1. Where there are ten children whose parents are in society, meet them an hour once a week. . . .

4. Talk with them every time you see any at home.

5. Pray in earnest for them. Diligently instruct and exhort all parents at their own houses.

7. Preach expressly on education; "But I have no gift for this." Pray earnestly for the gift and use means for it.<sup>2</sup>

These questions were first propounded many years before and appeared in an early volume entitled *Several Conversations Between the Rev. John Wesley, A.B., and the Preachers in Connection with and Containing the Form of Discipline Established Among the Preachers and People in the Methodist Societies*. *Discipline after Discipline* contained the same inquiries with the wording changed from time to time. The *Discipline* also mentions a small manual called *Our Instructions*. Its contents were to be committed to memory after being explained by an instructor.

In a footnote related to this same legislation in certain *Disciplines* we read:

The proper education of children is of exceeding great moment to the welfare of mankind. About one half of the human race are under the age of sixteen, and may be considered, the infants excepted, as capable of instruction. The welfare of the states and countries in which they live, and, what is infinitely more, the salvation of their souls, do, under the grace and providence of God, depend in a considerable degree upon their education. . . . Let us follow the direction of this section, and we shall meet many on the day of judgment, who will acknowledge before the Great Judge, and an assembled universe, that their first desires after Christ and salvation were received in their younger years by our instrumentality. . . .

N. B. We particularly recommend our Scripture catechism for the use of children.<sup>3</sup>

The last reference must have been to *Wesleyan Catechism*

<sup>2</sup> *Discipline*, Methodist Episcopal Church, 1785, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America*, 1798.

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No. 1. described in the preceding pages. Dr. Chappell describes a significant change in the method of religious instruction of children:

Meanwhile [by 1824] the Sunday school was undergoing a rapid change, becoming more distinctively a school of religion and more closely attached to the church. By the time of the convening of the General Conference of 1828 the distinction between the Sunday school and the weekly meeting for the religious instruction of the children of Church members and their friends, had practically disappeared and the Sunday school had become a school of religion for all classes and all ages. Instead, therefore, of retaining the direction to the preachers about bringing together weekly the children of each community and providing for their religious instruction, the Conference of 1828 simply directed that the preachers in charge could form Sunday schools wherever it was possible.<sup>4</sup>

The General Conference of 1804 indicates the appointment of an editor and a book steward. Publishing had been done on contract. The first books issued by the Methodist Book Concern were a reprint of *The Christian Pattern* by Thomas à Kempis, another reprint of *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* by Richard Baxter, and the fifth edition of the *Discipline*. The Conference of 1824 adopted a report on education which recommended

that pastors encourage the establishment of Sunday schools . . . that a committee be appointed to compile a larger Catechism for the use of Sunday schools . . . that the book-agents provide a good assortment of books suitable for the use of Sunday schools.

Doctor J. Minton Batten tell us:

On March 31, 1770, Joseph Pilmoor, one of the two first missionaries sent to America by Wesley, reported the receipt of £22, 82., from the sale of books "brought from England." Evidently the books sent by Wesley were insufficient to meet the demands. For on the same date Philip Embury, founder of the New York Methodist society, reported receipt of £1, 4s., for "sermons (reprinted)." These entries in the records of the John Street Society constitute the first references to

<sup>4</sup> Chappell, *op. cit.*, p. 29.



American Methodist activities in the fields of importing, selling and printing religious books.<sup>5</sup>

The Methodist Book Concern was established in 1789. It was placed under the direction of Rev. John Dickens as "Superintendent of the Printing and Book Business." John Dickens also wrote a *Short Scripture Catechism*, which was used widely, and a controversial pamphlet entitled, *Friendly Remarks on the Late Proceedings of the Rev. Mr. Mammatt*. John Fletcher's *Checks on Antinomianism* was reprinted. The Book Concern published a hymnal. The American edition of the Arminian Magazine was launched but continued only two years. However, it was the first periodical of American Methodism. When the book catalogue of the Book Concern was issued in 1785 twenty-four titles were listed, among them Wesley's *Works*, those of Fletcher, Asbury's *Journal*, *Disciplines*, "Christian biographies,"—manuals for use in the instruction of children, devotional writings, and controversial treatises.<sup>6</sup>

We find evidences of a sensitiveness over the handling of the so-called "secular" materials used so much in our early Sunday schools, in an action taken by the New York Annual Conference. The Conference requested the publication by the Book Steward of a periodical to be called *The Methodist Missionary Magazine*. The Conference also declared it, "improper for the agents of the Book Concern to purchase or sell grammars or any other such books." <sup>7</sup>

In January, 1818, Joshua Soule issued *The Methodist Magazine*. This was the first successful adventure of the Book Concern into the publication of periodical literature.<sup>8</sup> Not so successful was the publication of *The Youth's Instructor* under the direction of Nathan Bangs. It was a monthly periodical designed to provide teaching and reading material for young people.

The success of *The Christian Advocate* and the growing interest in the Sunday school movement prompted the General Conference [of 1828] to elect an editor who was to be responsible both for editing *The*

<sup>5</sup> See J. Minton Batten, *History of the Methodist Publishing House* (Nashville: Personnel & Public Relations Division, The Methodist Publishing House, 1953), p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

*Christian Advocate* and the issuance of a Child's Magazine, and Sunday school books and tracts."<sup>9</sup>

This task was assigned to Nathan Bangs. The General Conference of 1832 enlarged the staff of the Book Concern:

One editor was "to take charge of *The Methodist Magazine* and all the editorial business of the Book Concern, not included in our other periodical works." Another editor was to have the responsibility for issuing *The Christian Advocate*, *Youth's Instructor*, *The Child's Magazine* and Sunday school books and tracts.<sup>10</sup>

John P. Durbin assumed the task last described. Due largely to his efforts the first *Question Book of Methodism* was prepared along with "some volumes suitable for Sunday school libraries."

*The Sunday School Advocate* was launched in 1840. Dr. Wardle tells us that this may have been the result of the interest shown in a "Sunday school department which had been carried in *The Christian Advocate and Journal* for a number of years. In this department were found stories for children as well as material of help to parents. For a time there were "Letters on Sunday School Instruction" in which methods and problems of supervision were discussed. At one time this periodical carried a study course entitled, "Lessons for a Bible Class on the Book of Genesis."<sup>11</sup>

The Methodist Book Concern played an important role in the program of the church for its Sunday schools. In 1836 the Publishing House burned. This powerfully affected the work of the Methodist Sunday School Union, a denominational agency designed to cope with similar organizations on the outside. For awhile it seemed that the Union's operations would have to cease. There was a general impression that the decline of the Union and the interruption of the work of the Book Concern were definitely related.

From quadrennium to quadrennium Methodist *Disciplines* made reference to religious teaching. The legislation passed in 1836 included this directive:

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>11</sup> Wardle, *op. cit.*, pp. 69.

It shall be the duty of every preacher of a circuit or station to form Sunday schools, to obtain the names of children belonging to his congregations, to form them into classes, for the purpose of giving them religious instruction, to instruct them regularly himself, as much as his other duties will allow. The course of instruction shall not only embrace the nature of experimental religion, but also the nature, design, privileges and obligations of their baptism.<sup>12</sup>

Already in 1832 the General Conference had given instructions that there shall be a book, and the Book Agents and Editors in New-York are hereby requested to prepare such book as soon as convenient, in which shall be laid down, in the most simple form, the best entire system of Sunday-school teaching.<sup>13</sup>

Methodism was combating the destructive force of the Babel Period in Sunday-school curriculum as it kept at work trying to develop its own system of religious instruction.

The General Conference of 1840 appointed a Committee on Sunday Schools. It also provided for the appointment of an editor of the *Methodist Quarterly Review*, general books, and tracts; and an editor and an assistant, for the Christian Advocate and Journal, the Youth's Magazine and the Sabbath-school books.<sup>14</sup>

The Address of the Bishops to the General Conference of 1844 included the statement:

It is believed that much more might be done with a system better adapted to the capacities of the subjects of instruction, and with books suitable to different classes in the several stages of development.<sup>15</sup>

Here are signs of the awakening of interest in the providing for graded materials. This conference also decided

to inquire as to the expediency of this Conference electing a board of directors to superintend the general interests of the Sunday schools

<sup>12</sup> *Methodist Discipline*, 1836, pp. 58-59.

<sup>13</sup> *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 1832, I, 411.

<sup>14</sup> *Methodist Discipline*, 1840, p. 185.

<sup>15</sup> *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 1844, p. 170.



in our Church . . . [and of] withdrawing from all connection with voluntary associations on this subject.<sup>16</sup>

The final reference reveals the strained relations between the Methodist Episcopal Church and the American Sunday-School Union. The Sunday school is to become one of the connectional agencies of the church. In 1844 the Editor of Sunday School Books and Tracts was elected to serve also as Secretary of the Methodist Sunday School Union. Dr. Wardle tells us that:

He arranged with the Religious Tract Society of London for a free exchange of books, solicited the aid of many good American writers, and compiled and edited eight hundred Sunday school books. He also prepared the standard catechism of the Church.<sup>17</sup>

It is interesting to note the close association of teaching materials and tracts. At this point in Methodist history they were meant to serve the same purpose.

This was the last General Conference in which all the annual conferences, north and south, participated. Even though most of the strength of the body remained with the Methodist Episcopal Church, it suffered considerably as a result of the separation within Methodism which took place in 1844.

We have seen ways in which the genius of Methodism for education and the production of printed materials expressed itself. The dominant ideas of the movement did not coincide closely enough with those in the American Sunday-School Union to make it possible for Methodism to look to the independent agency for its leadership. Methodism assumed responsibility for its program of religious teaching and made the Sunday school a part of its ecclesiastical texture. Let us trace further developments in the new Methodist Episcopal Church as we follow its course of history after 1844.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>17</sup> See Wardle, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

## 9—AN EDITOR OF SUNDAY-SCHOOL PUBLICATIONS

The 1852 *Discipline* of the Methodist Episcopal Church provided for an Editor of Sunday-School Publications who was also to serve as Secretary of the Methodist Sunday School Union; and another editor to serve as Secretary of the Tract Society. (This arrangement continued till 1864 when the offices were combined.) More emphasis was placed on catechetical instruction. In the paragraph dealing with the catechism, this is added:

Let the preachers also publicly catechise the children in the Sunday school, and at special meetings appointed for that purpose. It shall also be the duty of each preacher in connection with reporting the Sabbath-school statistics . . . to state to what extent he has publicly or privately catechized the children of his charge.<sup>1</sup>

The *Discipline* of 1868 of the Methodist Episcopal Church contains the directive that:

The editor of the *Sunday School Journal* . . . [is] to have charge of the department of Sunday-School Requisites, including books of instruction for Sunday-schools and Normal Classes. He shall be Corresponding Secretary of the [Methodist] Sunday-School Union and Superintendent of the Department of Sunday-School Instruction.<sup>2</sup>

There was to be a separate editor for the *Sunday School Advocate* and tracts who would be the Corresponding Secretary of the Tract Society. On page 238 of this *Discipline* is this remarkable provision:

It shall be the duty of the Preacher in Charge, aided by the superintendent and the Committee on Sunday-Schools [elected by the

<sup>1</sup> 1852 *Discipline*, Methodist Episcopal Church, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> 1868 *Discipline*, Methodist Episcopal Church, p. 254.

Quarterly Conference], to decide as to what books shall be used in our Sunday-schools.<sup>3</sup>

On the surface this provision seems to be an effort to weaken the trend toward connectionalizing the work of the Sunday schools and systematizing the materials which they were to use. However, there seems to be no evidence that such an effort gathered support. In the *Discipline* of 1876 there is a statement in the Appendix on page 379, relating to the instruction of children, which says:

We cordially approve the course of Bible study for the family and the Sunday-school, adopted in 1872 by the Sunday-School Union of our Church, embodying the Lessons of the International Series, the Catechism of the Church, select passages of Scripture to be committed to memory, and special lessons on the doctrine, usages, and benevolent agencies of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

Note the acceptance of the International Series which had been developed by the International Sunday School Association and was just coming into use. The legislation shows that for several years the person responsible for creating teaching materials for the Sunday school is called: "The Editor of Sunday-School Books, Papers, and Tracts." In 1860 the General Conference had directed the Book Concern

to issue a journal for teachers in Sunday schools and "to publish graduated lesson books for classes." . . .

Its agents were authorized [by the Conference of 1868] to establish a new magazine for young people which was to be called *Golden Hours*. Publication of this periodical was begun in 1869 and discontinued in 1880 because of lack of sufficient support.<sup>5</sup>

Up to this point we have given only casual mention to the Methodist Sunday School Union. This agency played a significant role in circulating the Sunday-school materials, and it deserves further attention. The earliest annual report of the Union which the writer was able to secure was that of the fifth annual meeting, which bore the date 1845. The report gives a statement concern-

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>4</sup> 1876 *Discipline*, Methodist Episcopal Church, p. 379.

<sup>5</sup> Batten, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.



ing the Union by Rev. William Roberts: "By no means is this an independent organization; and to labor here is the legitimate business of Christian men and women." <sup>6</sup>

It is quite possible that the reference here is in answer to the charge that the Methodist Sunday School Union was an unrelated organization under the control of laymen with only a slight interest in denominational religious instruction. The speaker continued:

The Sabbath school is more *fruitful* than any other instrumentality, out of the pulpit, in the conversion of souls. Need I say out of the pulpit, sir? The truth is, the pulpit has never done its work until it has first of all taken care of these babes and sucklings, out of whose lips Christ is perfecting praise.<sup>7</sup>

Methodism has never tolerated an iron curtain or any other type of narrow separation from her co-workers of other faiths. On the other hand, it has been favorable to interdenominational co-operation. The problems of such co-operation are real and cannot be overlooked. In one of the numerous interdenominational meetings in which he has participated, the writer recalls that now and then the presiding officer, Dr. J. McAfee Robinson, of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., one of the leaders of the International Council of Religious Education, kept taking note of the inability of the group to make progress. This led him to remark, "Co-operation is the thief of time." Despite the unremitting purpose of Methodists to work with others, they were aware of the serious difficulties to be met. It was necessary to organize the Methodist Sunday School Union partly because of this fact. In his *History of the Sunday School Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church*, Dr. Wardle states that:

The constitution [of the Methodist Sunday School Union] was adopted and the society formed on the second day of April, 1827. . . . It received the sanction of the several Annual Conferences, who recommended to the people of their charge to form auxiliary societies in every circuit and station, and send to the general depository in New York for their books. . . .

Our establishment, however, of a distinct organization, provoked no

<sup>6</sup> *Fifth Annual Report of the Methodist Sunday School Union*, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

little opposition from some quarters, and led the managers into an investigation of the origin of Sunday schools, both in Europe and America." <sup>8</sup>

The feeling was running high. The American Sunday-School Union would make strong assertions concerning the claims of Robert Raikes to the title of founder of the Sunday school. The Methodists in America made counter claims for John Wesley and Hannah Ball. The church papers were filled with the controversy. It also found a place in the secular papers. Lawsuits were threatened about violation of copyrights covering reading books. In the controversy the Methodists were not alone. In one state the tension was so strong that on October, 1828, the directing board of the Massachusetts Sunday School Union took this action:

Voted, that all books in the depository, which are acceptable to each denomination connected with the Union, shall be kept by themselves; and that all such as are acceptable to the Baptists, and not to the Congregationalists and Presbyterians, or *vice versa*, shall be kept by themselves, and that every order for books shall be answered by books from the neutral department, unless it is known that others are wanted.<sup>9</sup>

The struggle between the denominations in the area of reading materials must have been violent indeed when it became necessary to maintain a "neutral department" in the Union depository. We are not surprised to find that the Massachusetts Sunday School Union was dissolved soon after this action was taken.

As stated in the constitution of the Methodist Sunday School Union, the object of

this society shall be to promote the formation, and to concentrate the efforts, of Sabbath schools connected with the congregations of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and all others that may become auxiliary; to aid in the instruction of the rising generation, particularly in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and in the service and worship of God.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Cited in Wardle, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62. From *Christian Advocate and Journal*, No. 33., p. 130.

<sup>9</sup> From *A Brief History of the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society*. Cited in Wardle, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>10</sup> From *Methodist Magazine* (American), August, 1827. See Wardle, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

In the address of the managers of the new organization, signed by Nathan Bangs, we find further reference to the difficulties brought about by efforts to work within the American Sunday-School Union:

The primary object of Sunday schools was to impart elementary instruction, mixed with religious improvement, to those children who were destitute of the advantages derived from common schools. Though this original object ought never to be abandoned, yet the general diffusion of this sort of instruction in our country, through the medium of common schools, and public and private free schools, renders this object less essential. Hence religious instruction is the grand and primary object of Sunday school instruction in our day and among our children. On this account, however humiliating the fact, a general union of all parties becomes the more difficult. Whatever may be the intention, each teacher of religion will more or less inculcate his own peculiar views of Christianity, and thus insensibly create party feelings and interests. And this difficulty is increased by the practice recently adopted by the employment of missionaries who are to be supported from the funds of the general institution. The managers are of the opinion that the most likely way for the several denominations to live and labor together in peace, is for each to conduct its own affairs, and still to hold out the hand of fellowship to its neighbor.<sup>11</sup>

What this calm statement tells us is that "reading, writing, and figuring" are things which the Sunday school must pass to the public school, while concentrating on its own task of religious education. Leaders of the American Sunday-School Union did not agree. Furthermore, they were creating more difficulties by trying to do missionary work in the area of the churches. This made necessary the organization of the Methodist Sunday School Union. This tenseness among the major bodies at work in the field of religious education has not ceased, even today. There remains some of the feeling that the denominations and the independent agencies have conflicting claims in this area. Such tenseness is sometimes felt in the general gatherings and also in the relations within local churches. The writer recalls his struggle with a serious problem concerning church-school literature. When he visited the problem situation he found that the church-school superintendent in the local church was an official in an

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Wardle, *op. cit.*, p. 63. From *Christian Advocate and Journal*, No. 33, pp. 130, 131.



independent organization and was trying to displace the regular curriculum materials in order to introduce those issued by the outside publisher. Similar experiences in the area of field organizations could be recounted. We do not need to be looked upon as partisan when we realize the difficulties as well as the advantages of the co-operation of a denomination with a co-operative agency.

The Methodist Sunday School Union maintained what it called auxiliary, or charity, schools. This was a perpetuation of the old idea of Robert Raikes. However, the Sunday schools of America were able to eliminate the idea of class distinctions. Many currents were flowing within the new organization. We have reports of some leaders committed to progress, others to the old ways of doing things. This is illustrated in a report made by the Leesburg [Va.] Methodist Sabbath School Society to the Union:

The school consists of one hundred and thirty-six scholars, divided into three Bible Classes, two reference Testament classes, five Testament, and five alphabet and spelling classes, under the care of eleven male and fifteen female teachers. . . . The small classes in the alphabet and spelling book, have been taught in 3,367 lessons. The Testament classes have recited 11,022 verses, 3,662 pages catechism, and 2,387 hymns. The Bible classes have been examined in 1,913 chapters.<sup>12</sup>

In its Fifth Annual Report (1845), the function of the Methodist Sunday School Union is described. It

is to act under the auspices of the church, to move in the same orbit, and to promote the same great ends. . . . A publishing institution it was never designed to be; since the church had in great wisdom already provided an establishment competent to furnish our whole people with books and periodicals in every department of religious literature. The business of the Sunday-School Union in this respect was rather to aid the Book Concern in making proper selections for this department of publication, and also in giving currency and circulation to the books; while at the same time its patronage would tend to reduce the prices. But its great and peculiar office is to listen to the calls of the destitute, and to supply their wants.<sup>13</sup>

The Union thus looked upon its task as being in large part the co-ordination of the work of the Sunday school; especially to

<sup>12</sup> Cited in Wardle, *op cit.*, p. 66. From *Christian Advocate and Journal*, November 2, 1827.

<sup>13</sup> *Fifth Annual Report of the Methodist Sunday School Union*, pp. 17, 18.

bring local schools into a more vital relation with the whole work of the church. What they taught was to be brought into line with the point of view of the denomination as a whole. Otherwise a new Babel Period in Methodism could easily come about.

The General Conference had decreed that the Quarterly Conference in each charge was to act as a board of managers of the Sunday school,

having supervision of all the Sunday schools and Sunday-school societies within its limits, and shall be an auxiliary to the Sunday-School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>14</sup>

Other suggestions were:

Let our catechisms be used as extensively as possible, both in our Sunday schools and families. . . . We must use efforts to circulate more extensively our Sunday-school books and periodicals. . . .

A large addition has been made to our list of Sunday-school books during the year past, while at the same time manifest improvements in the style, illustrations, and general finish of the works issued are apparent.

Besides several tracts and paper-covered books, the following new library books have been issued since last October. [Fifty-five titles are mentioned, among them, *The Ant*, *The Jew Among All Nations*, *The Kingdom of Heaven Among Children*, *Learning to Think*, *Useful Trades*, *Infant Teacher's Manual* and *Bible Stories for Small Children*.]<sup>15</sup>

Two periodicals were reported as having been published. *The Encourager* took the place of *Child's Magazine*. The report contains this complaint:

Owing to the excessively high postage charged upon small pamphlets, no effort has been made to extend the circulation of this periodical beyond the vicinity of our book depositories, where it is furnished at two cents per number. It is much sought for as a reward book for children. . . . At the close of the year it will be bound and added to the Library.<sup>16</sup>

This same report also makes reference to *The Sunday-School Advocate*. It is described as

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 39.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

The organ of this Union, and the only official Sunday-school periodical of the Methodist Episcopal Church. . . . Instead of being *solely* a children's paper, it is designed to furnish a portion of matter in season for all the members and friends of Sunday schools—the children, the teachers, the parents.<sup>17</sup>

*The Methodist Almanac* was a kind of promotion magazine built around the widespread interest in the weather and other similar developments. It proved to be an effective way of reaching the church constituency. Published by Mason and Lane in New York, the first issue appeared in 1832. The earliest issue which the writer could find had on the cover page the following:

THE METHODIST ALMANAC . . . for the year of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . 1837. . . . Being the First after the Bisextile, and the Sixty-first of American Independence. . . . Containing all the Customary calculations in Equal or Clock time. . . . Fitted to the horizon and Meridian of Cincinnati, Latitude 30°-6' N., Long. 84°-27' W. . . . by David Young, Philom.

Note the references to Leap Year and the birth of American Independence. After some searching the writer found that the degree beside the editor's name means that he is a lover of learning.

*The Methodist Almanac* had the usual calendar. Associated with various days were important events of the past, many of them related to Methodism. The birth of William McKendree, the burning of the Methodist Book Room in New York, the organization of the Methodist Missionary Society, the sailing of Bishop Asbury for America, and the death of Asbury are a few of the events featured in this issue. It also contained references to the books and periodicals of the church and to its various colleges and academies.

Reproductions of pages from *The Methodist Almanac* are carried now and then in *Together*. The various issues carried information about most of the beliefs, organization, and work of the church. Drawings were used now and then. One of these bore the title, "A Poor Man Reading the Bible at a Book Store." Beneath the picture was a rather long poem ending with the lines:

Had not my Lord been my relief,  
Had not thy truth sustained,

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*



I must have perished in my grief,  
No other help remained.

We have seen how interest in preparing and distributing teaching materials developed among Methodist leaders. Publishing activity was enlarging; the Sunday School Union and the Book Concern were working in co-operation. As these activities increased, it became necessary to provide editorial service to create, unify, and enrich the literature used in the Sunday schools. We shall discover that an effective form of enrichment came to be provided in the Sunday-school library.

## 10—SUNDAY-SCHOOL LIBRARIES

In the preceding chapter reference was made to *The Methodist Almanac*. The writer found that the issue for 1843 contained a Book Concern catalogue. Under the section entitled, "Instruction Book for Sunday Schools" there were listed:

*Alphabets and Lessons*, on boards . . . *Bibles* . . . *Hymns*. . . . *Short Scripture Catechism* . . . *Notes on the Gospels*. . . . *Questions on the Historical Parts of the Old Testament* . . . *The Gospels* . . . *Acts of the Apostles* . . . *Scripture Catechism*, A Compend of Sacred History in the form of Questions and Answers . . . *Wesleyan Methodist Catechisms* (three in number). . . . *Sunday School Teacher's Book*. . . . *Testimonials for Reward Books* . . . and *Watt's Divine Songs*.

In this same issue, under the section entitled "Sunday School Library," 212 titles were listed. These included bound copies of *Child's Magazine*, religious biographies, antiquities, natural history, Bible history, "Juvenile Memoirs," descriptions of other lands, travel stories, missionary stories, and advice on Christian living.

Today it is of particular interest to discover that copies of *Child's Magazine* were bound and sold for use in Sunday-school

libraries. This practice was so valuable that it is being carried out today in the case of various church-school periodicals. The issue of *Methodist Almanac* for 1879 carried outlines of the International Bible Lessons (these were outlines prepared by the International Lesson Committee as uniform lessons) for that year along with the names of the members of the International Lesson Committee.

Years before the organization of the American Sunday-School Union, workers in Sunday schools were trying to meet the need for reading materials for families and churches. The First Day Society issued, or kept for sale, "small moral books to be let to the scholars or given as premiums."<sup>1</sup> Some of the titles of these books have already been mentioned, such as *Dooley's Fables* and *Catechism of Nature*. Part of the missionary efforts of the American Sunday-School Union consisted of raising money for libraries or providing single volumes to be placed in the keeping of schools in underprivileged situations. We are told that a Sunday-school teacher of St. Louis, Missouri, known to the public as "O.B.," gave many thousands of dollars to furnish library books and other materials to needy Sunday schools in the West."<sup>2</sup> The American Sunday-School Union reported that by the first quarter of the nineteenth century "about 1,000,000 volumes were put in circulation through libraries"<sup>3</sup> in the districts in which it was at work.

In the Constitution of the Sunday-School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church we find that Article IV relates to this matter of libraries. Under the title, "Funds, How to be Expended; Applications for Aid" the constitution says:

In all cases of application for aid, if relief be deemed necessary, it shall be granted in books, unless the circumstances seem to demand the appropriation of money.<sup>4</sup>

At a meeting the Board of Managers made a glowing report of progress which included the following:

<sup>1</sup> Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>4</sup> *Fifth Annual Report of the Sunday-School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Lane and Tippet, 1845), p. 12.

Some of the greatest improvements of modern times have had a direct bearing upon our enterprise.

When the first Sunday schools were established who could have imagined, for example, that printing would ever be done by steam! Yet now a single steam-engine drives a score of presses, and does more printing in an hour than could be done by the old method in weeks. No sooner are the products of the press complete, than steam-boats and steam-cars bear them in every direction against wind and tide, across mountains and valleys, scattering them by thousands among their readers. Formerly there were no religious books for children. Not long ago they were scarce. Now whole libraries are printed for the use of the young, and millions of volumes are read by our children.

Numerous pens are employed in supplying the demand for sound juvenile literature. Distant nations exchange their intellectual products to facilitate this great object. The operations of our own office illustrate these facts. A book is issued in London, say on the first of January, the steam-ship bears it across the Atlantic; it is read, revised, stereotyped, printed, bound, and by the first of February it is delivered for sale at our depositories, ready to bless thousands of our fellow-countrymen. The reverse process may be equally prompt, and by means of it America thought brought into contact with the minds and hearts of British youth.<sup>5</sup>

The writer felt that this report was quite enthusiastic, especially in the matter of the amount of time consumed in crossing the Atlantic. However, he gives it here as it was made. Perhaps it is no more "enthusiastic" than some of his own editorial reports to the church agencies with which he was related. It is difficult in our technological age to get clearly in mind how much improvement this report indicated. To those then at work great things were happening.

Our predecessors failed to point out the service of the Sunday schools and the materials they used to the general enlightenment of their fellows. They were carrying on about all the adult education of which America could boast at that time. It would be hard to measure what our Sunday schools have meant to the education of the nation. One of the most effective forms of the attack upon illiteracy made by our predecessors was the establishment of libraries and the publication of books for general reading. These

<sup>5</sup> *Annual Report of the Sunday-School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 1846* (New York: Lane and Scott, 1852), p. 49.



books were cheap in price, and in certain situations were supplied without cost. They were read by thousands of persons of various ages.

In the *Annual Report of the Sunday-School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 1846*, there is a report of current publication activity and circulation.

Under "Sunday School Requisites" we find

Scripture cards for Sunday-School rooms, tickets, and certificates for the encouragement of scholars, spelling and reading books, catechisms, Scripture proofs, question books, books of reference, manuals, Bible dictionaries, notes and commentaries, hymns, Bibles, Testaments.<sup>6</sup>

The "requisites" for the Primary Department are listed as:

Twenty Alphabetical Cards, with Scripture mottoes and moral precepts, one hundred children's tracts, two hundred and sixty Reward Books; Children's Library, [ninety volumes].<sup>7</sup>

For the "Youth's Library" there were three hundred and eighty-two volumes, and for the "Adult Library" six volumes. We are told further that:

Although the actual publication and sale of Sunday school books belongs, by arrangement and custom, to the Book Agency of the church, yet it is a department of our enterprise blending at every point with the interests of this Union. Every book and tract bears the Union's imprint. . . . Hence we enumerate from year to year all the issues of Sunday-school books, as legitimately embraced within our sphere of official observation. . . .

At the same time we take great pleasure in acknowledging our indebtedness to the *Religious Tract Society of London*, and sundry other English publishing houses, for useful and interesting works that we have reprinted. . . .

The classification of our Sunday-school books is now considered very complete and satisfactory.

First, we have the *Children's Library*, in two series, designated by the letters A and B. Series A is for the smallest children capable of deriving benefit from books. Series B is for the next grade of years and capacity. . . .

<sup>6</sup> (New York: Lane & Scott, 1852).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

The *Youth's Library* has been more select, and more in keeping with its title. . . .

No additions have been made the present year to the adult library, chiefly for the reason that a similar class of reading is so abundantly furnished in the *General Department* of our Book-Room Publications.<sup>8</sup>

The revision of the *Catechism* was an important concern of the Union at this time. The 1848 Annual Report tells us:

The General Conference having directed the revision of our Standard Catechism, that work is now in progress. The Catechisms hitherto used among us were compiled many years ago, for the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England. Although correct in doctrine, they have not been found well adapted to the use of our people, chiefly on account of containing many hard words and phrases not easily remembered by children.

It is now proposed to revise these indispensable compendiums of Christian truth, so as to provide one principal Catechism for general use on Christian doctrine, ordinances, and duties, to be accompanied with Scripture proofs.

Some of the most venerable and distinguished divines of our Church have been invited to co-operate in the preparation of this Catechism. . . .

Corresponding to the general Catechism, will be an Elementary Catechism upon the basis of the former, but in shorter and plainer words, adapted to the capacities of young children.

A Catechism of Scripture History, embracing the topics of the Appendix, to Nos. 1 and 2 of our present Catechism, will complete the series. . . .

In order to furnish the means of continual progress in the study of the Scriptures, we have had several new volumes of questions prepared in the most approved manner. . . .

We have also in press a new and cheap question-book, entitled, **CURIOUS AND USEFUL QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLE.**

These questions are somewhat in the style of the Scripture questions published from time to time in the *Sunday School Advocate*. . . .

We have, for some time, contemplated an issue of tracts specially adapted to Sunday-school purposes.<sup>9</sup>

Here is another evidence of the effort to combine the creating of teaching materials for the Sunday school with the preparation of

<sup>8</sup> *Annual Report of the Sunday-School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 1847*, pp. 73-78.

<sup>9</sup> *Annual Report of the Sunday-School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Year 1848*, pp. 36-39.

tracts. It required several decades to discover the different functions of these materials.

*The Annual Report of the Sunday-School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 1852* reveals that the editor is in Europe. His trip was being taken

with the intention of making provision for future publications in this department, and also of gathering, by personal observation upon the Sunday-school operations of the Old World, any ideas that may be of advantage to our practical and enlarging movements on this side of the Atlantic.<sup>10</sup>

At that time the functions of editor, as well as those of program administrator, rested in the hands of a single officer. This trip included the study both of teaching materials used in other countries and of the procedure of leaders in organizing and supervising Sunday schools. When the editor returned he reported that his trip had been devoted

to extensive observation upon the modes and means of promoting and extending Sunday schools in Great Britain and on the Continent of Europe, and also to the collection of material for the future enlargement of our Sunday-school libraries<sup>11</sup>

The report of the editor goes on to say:

We are too much dependent on foreign authorship, and we perceive the necessity of stimulating in this important direction the activity of American talent. . . .

In hope of increasing the production, and improving the character of Sunday-school literature, the Sunday-School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church offers the following series of premiums:—

1. For the best tract on the DUTY OF PERSONAL CHRISTIAN LABOR in Sunday Schools . . . . . \$100
2. For the best Infant Sunday-School Instruction Book . . . . . \$200
3. For the best book for Sunday-school reading adapted to the Children's Library Series A. . . . . \$100
4. For the best book for Sunday-School reading, adapted to the Youth's Library . . . . . \$250

<sup>10</sup> P. 60.

<sup>11</sup> *Annual Report of the Sunday-School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Year 1853*, p. 50.



5. For the best book of reading, adapted to the Adult Library. \$350<sup>12</sup>

The editor went into considerable detail in his directions covering the preparation of these books. The new Infant Sunday-school Instruction Book

should combine theory with practice; and besides a series of suitable lessons, should contain plain directions, illustrating to teachers the best modes of interesting children of tender years, and impressing upon their minds and hearts the truths of religion. . . .

As to the volume desired for the Adult Library, we would prefer some topic connected with the Sunday schools.

For instance: "The necessity and importance of Sunday schools in a Christian nation in which the Church is separate from the State," or "The necessity of the Sunday-school system as an Accompaniment to the public free-school system of America;" "The remunerative power of Sunday schools and Sunday-school teaching."<sup>13</sup>

In a circular addressed to authors and correspondents, the editor had this to say:

We are frequently asked, if we do not wish translations, abridgements, or compilations? We reply, that our principal demand is for original matter. . . .

The scope of Sunday-school literature is almost unbounded. Whatever in the whole range of creation, of history, of science—material, mental, or moral; whatever in nature or in art,—among things present or things past,—is capable of being applied, clearly and satisfactorily, to a religious purpose, may become an approved theme for a Sunday-school book.

In this enumeration no space is allowed for *fiction*. Whatever others may think or say on this subject, we wish nothing offered to us which the author is not willing to guarantee as substantial truth.<sup>14</sup>

In his directive to writers the editor makes the perennial plea for simplicity of language and clear style. He also gives the reminder that writer and editor bear a responsibility to the agency which they have been appointed to serve. Certain conditions must be met to make material acceptable. He says:

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-59.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

It is probably understood by all who may furnish MSS. to this office, that ours is an official press. Whatever, therefore, might be the personal taste or views of the editor, he would not feel at liberty to publish any work that is not called for by the public, and general interests of the Church, whose officer he is. What is thus said of a book as a whole, may be said of any of its parts.

It is, therefore, expected that, whenever a MS. is offered for examination, it is submitted to the full discretion of the editor to make all such changes and corrections as in his judgment may be called for. . . . The reception of any work for examination creates no manner of obligation to publish it, unless it is deemed in every way suitable, either with or without correction. . . . The rates allowed are from *twenty-five* to *seventy* cents per thousand ems.<sup>15</sup>

To a modern editor these lines read as if, for the most part, they had been worked out with his office staff. Even at this early stage in the growth of our editorial activity, one notes the difficult balance between maintaining freedom of expression and responsibility to the church and its policies. The modern editor wonders if his distant predecessors were ever accused of supporting a "birds, flowers, and bees religion" because he made use of the facts of external nature in the curriculum. Within the experience of the writer this has been a recurring criticism. The phobia concerning the use of fiction and fictionalized historical narratives has passed, now that we have a clearer idea of the importance of the use of mental images in teaching religion. The payment to writers has increased greatly. We are still unable, however, to compete for the services of many of the most talented of our modern writers.

The story of the efforts of Methodism to provide libraries for its constituency is interesting to anyone who senses the importance of creating and elevating taste in reading and providing the imagery needed to view life as a Christian experience. This was an important objective of the Methodist Sunday School Union and the Book Concern. We have seen how the outreach of such efforts complicated the educational procedure and increased the demands resting upon those responsible for the creation of teaching and reading materials for the Sunday school. The pressure of these demands tended to draw some of the denominations together, as we shall see in a later chapter. Mean-

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

while, we shall note how the Babel Period led to the emphasis upon uniformity.

## 11—A SYSTEM OF STUDY MATERIALS

As the church kept at work on its teaching program the problem of systematizing the materials of instruction kept coming up. The situation was confused enough to be called at this time the Babel Period. Unless conditions were corrected, the purposes of Christian teaching could easily be defeated. It is interesting to note that along with desire for system in the creation and use of curriculum there existed some concern for its grading. In the *Annual Report of the Sunday-School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 1853*, we find this statement:

We fear that in many Sunday schools there is not sufficient attention paid to arranging and adhering to a proper course of study. This is a matter of great importance. . . .

What is needed everywhere is a PROGRESSIVE SYSTEM, which shall commence with the infant school, and advance, by regular gradations, to the highest limits of adult Bible-class study.

For such a progressive course provision is made in our list of requisites and books of instruction; and the following course, subject to slight variations, according to peculiar circumstances, will be found to be judiciously planned. It takes for granted the proper classification of a school; viz., its division into an *Infant School*, *Primary Classes*, *Youth's Classes*, and *Senior Classes* or *Bible Classes*.”<sup>1</sup>

These proposals are further elaborated:

*Instruction in the Infant Class*—Singing, and infantile hymns; Infant Teacher's Manual, Catechism, No. 1; Verbal explanations of Scripture events and moral duties, alternated at each lesson.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.



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*Study in Primary Classes*—Child's Lesson-Book on the New Testament; Child's Lesson Book on the Old Testament; Catechism, No. 1, continued; *Wesleyan Methodist Catechism*, *Creagh's Scripture Catechism* . . . *Scripture Proofs*.

Question books—Holdich's Questions on the Historical Parts of the Old Testament; Covell's Questions on Matthew . . . on Acts; Longking's Questions on the Gospels; Peirce's Questions on Genesis . . . on Exodus . . . on the Acts; Curious and useful Questions on the Bible; Questions on the New Testament, Child's Lesson Book on the Old Testament, Child's Lesson Book on the Bible.

*In Youth's Classes*—Catechism, No. 2, in short lessons; Questions on the New Testament; Questions on the Old Testament; Questions on the Gospels; Monthly Questions; Curious and Useful Questions; Catechism, No. 3; Questions on the Acts; Romans; Genesis; Exodus, and other historical books of the Old Testament.

*In Bible Classes*—Review of Catechism Nos. 2 and 3; Questions on the New Testament; Questions on the Old Testament; Strong's Harmony; Hibbard's Palestine; The Epistles of the New Testament; The Psalms and Prophecies, The Book of Revelation.

Lesson-Books, Manuals, Etc.—*The Sunday School Manual*; The Catechism Illustrated or, Teacher's Assistant; Infant Teacher's Manual, Sunday-School Teacher's Guide, Hibbard's Geography of Palestine, The Sabbath School, The Bible Scholar's Manual, [dictionaries, stories of Scriptural events and maps].<sup>a</sup>

We give this list of teaching materials in order to show the large number of items available to the Sunday school. The list reveals an effort to grade the materials worked out with very little grasp of what is meant by grading.

For several years the reports of the Union reveal continued efforts to systematize the teaching materials provided for the Sunday school and to group them in accordance with the way Sunday schools were divided at that time. However, progress was slow and leaders showed signs of impatience. In the *Annual Report of the Sunday-School Union for 1854* we find an expression of complaint:

It will also be necessary to pay more attention than has been usual heretofore to a systematic and thorough course of study in our schools. It is surprising to find how extensively at this late day the *mere learn-*

<sup>a</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95, 99-100.

ing of verses constitutes the staple employment of Sunday schools; also how few well-conducted infant and Bible classes there are.<sup>3</sup>

We note that the lists of materials reveal vestiges of separate helps for teachers. Leaders are realizing that Christian teaching is more than merely hearing the recitation of Bible verses. Our readers may recall the old conundrum, "When is a school not a school?" with the answer, "When it is a Sunday school." Here we see evidence that Methodist Sunday-school workers were proceeding to make such a cynical question ridiculous. They were showing concern to provide teaching materials graded to pupil need and vital in nature, and also to provide teachers with helps which would show them what teaching really means. To be sure, there is still some demand for spelling books and readers. Question books and catechisms are widely used, but these are being made to compete with better prepared curriculum. The *Sunday School Advocate* was made a periodical especially for children. By 1860 the *Sunday-School Teacher's Journal* was in preparation. More clearly "graduated Sunday-school text books" were being planned. The high cost of paper made it necessary to discontinue *The Sunday-School Teacher's Journal*. Within a year its place was taken by *Sunday School Journal for Teachers and Young People*.

John H. Vincent was an alert and farsighted pastor who sympathized with the efforts being made to improve the Sunday-school literature. He had the sound conviction that the improvement must begin at the "grass roots." In his charge he experimented with the development and use of teaching materials and also with the training of teachers. The young pastor attracted so much attention that he was made a member of the staff of the Chicago Sunday School Union. His work there led to the creation of *The Sunday School Teacher's Quarterly*, which later was given the title of *The Sunday School Teacher*. Dr. Vincent developed a course in biblical geography known as the *Palestine Course*. The visitor to Lake Chautauqua, New York and Ocean Grove, New Jersey can see the topographical reproductions of the land of Palestine inspired by the teaching of this course over a century ago. Vincent's training courses for Sunday-school teachers were

<sup>3</sup> *Annual Report of the Sunday-School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 1854*, p. 70.

well received at Chautauqua. In fact, it may have helped to inspire those to carry on a significant enterprise in adult education through the holding of Chautauqua classes throughout the country.

Soon Dr. Vincent published in the periodical *The Sunday School Teacher* a course of study entitled *Two Years With Jesus*. When Dr. Vincent was given a high position in his own denomination, he was succeeded by Dr. Eggleston as editor of *The Sunday School Teacher*, the name of which was changed to the *National Sunday School Teacher*. In this periodical Eggleston published a course of lessons which he called *The National Series*.

Dr. Vincent became executive secretary of the Methodist Sunday School Union and gave strong impetus to the work of this agency. It was not long before a slight rivalry developed between these leaders. As we have said, Eggleston developed *The National Series*; Dr. Vincent developed for the Methodists *The Berean Series*. Both of these series were built on the uniform principle of proving the same lesson, with adaptations, for the various age groups. Both Eggleston and Vincent took a strong stand in behalf of uniform lessons. In his introduction to the first series of lessons which he prepared, Dr. Vincent stated his position:

We deem it desirable to engage the entire school in the study of the same lesson each Sabbath. Thereby concentration, repetition, definiteness, depth of impression and thoroughness are secured. A central thought pervades the devotional and intellectual exercises of the school. The Scripture selection containing the lesson for the day is read responsively at the opening of the session, and introduces this central idea. The opening prayer is inspired by it. It is the burden of every song. It facilitates the general review at the close of the session. It is of immense service in the Sunday school prayer meeting. The wise pulpit may employ it for the evening discourse, and thus add "line upon line, precept upon precept." For the family we provide daily readings.<sup>4</sup>

The reaction from the multitude of different materials of the Babel Period had set in. The "wave of the future" was driving everything toward the use of the principle of uniformity. Not long after the National Sunday School Association had been formed, workers in Canada began to participate in its operations, and the name was changed to the International Sunday School

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Wardle, *op. cit.*, p. 139. Introduction to *First Year with Jesus*, for third grade.



Association. In 1871 representatives of twenty-nine denominational publishing houses, meeting in New York, passed this resolution and sent it forward to the meeting of the International Sunday School Convention, soon to begin its sessions:

*Resolved*, That this convention appoint a committee to consist of five clergymen and five laymen, to select a course of Bible lessons for a series of years not exceeding seven, which shall, as far as they decide possible, embrace a general study of the whole Bible, alternating between the Old and New Testaments semi-annually or quarterly, as they shall deem best, and to publish a list of such lessons as fully as possible, and at least for two years next ensuing, as early as the 1st of August, 1872; and that this Convention recommend their adoption by the Sunday-schools of the whole country.<sup>5</sup>

The resolution was passed, and the projected outlines were given the title of the *International Uniform Lessons*. An International Lesson Committee was set up and was given these rather simple instructions:

1. Alternation each year between the Old and New Testaments.
2. Beginning with Genesis, to select from the Old Testament in chronological order.
3. To spend a part of each year in studying the life and ministry of Christ, beginning with Matthew and passing in order through the Gospels.
4. To follow with lessons on the apostles, the planting of the Church, and the doctrines of the New Testament, as contained in Acts and the Epistles.<sup>6</sup>

The first cycle of courses ran from 1873 to 1879. The Committee worked out the outlines in experimental fashion, realizing that it would profit from criticisms. By the time the first cycle was being completed, it was clear that the courses were fragmentary. This led to placing an entire year of study on the Gospel of Mark in the second cycle and a year each in the third cycle on Matthew and Luke. The thirteenth Sunday of each quarter was left open for the denominations to use as they saw fit.

At the beginning, the International Lesson Committee, acting

<sup>5</sup> John R. Sampey, *The International Lesson System* (Nashville: The Sunday School Board Southern Baptist Convention), p. 85.

<sup>6</sup> From 1905 *Official Report, Eleventh International Sunday School Convention*, p. 44.

under specific orders, selected only the scripture passage on which any given lesson was to be built. Later the Committee added the Golden Text to be memorized. The aim of these lessons was to bring about the conversion of Sunday-school pupils of all ages and also to spread the knowledge and understanding of the Bible. The tendency to oversimplify the process of religious education was strong. While the learner was given some consideration, he was looked upon as the subject of a type of instruction which would lead to conversion. According to some of the extremists who favored this system, little could be done for the learner before he was converted—and little could be done for him after it had taken place. The idea that God, the learner, and the teacher might work together to lead to a growing experience of the Savior and increasing ability to live a Christlike life had not found an important place in the thinking of this group.

The *Uniform Lessons* were quickly adopted by a number of denominations, which built their complete lessons on these outlines. The outlines were pitched to an adult level and adapted to the capacities of children and youth. Later on, this principle of adaptation was questioned when it was learned that adult concepts of religion and life cannot be brought within the range of understanding and experience of younger pupils simply by shortening words and simplifying phrases and sentences. The adoption of the *International Uniform Lessons* was a turning point in the history of literature for the Sunday school. At last the churches had a system of study materials. By the time the International Lesson Committee had been at work two decades, the denominations were producing and distributing to their Sunday schools thousands of pupils' quarterlies and teachers' magazines far better than any materials published hitherto. Workers in Sunday schools felt a lift of morale. The schools themselves came to have a real part to play in the life of the local church. New types of lessons and lesson helps were developed, such as manuals on child life and methods of teaching. The volume of production made the cost of the materials cheaper. Here was a cheap, popular, widespread system of Sunday-school lessons which drove the confusion of the Babel Period of curriculum into oblivion. It is easy to see how important the *International Uniform Lessons* became, for the time being, to the work of the Sunday school.

Naturally, these lessons had defects. They oversimplified the religious life and its growth. They failed to cover the entire Bible, omitting some of its most significant sections. Other criticisms will come out as we proceed with our story.

## 12—CONSECRATING THE PRINTING PRESS

As we have noted, Methodism has shown a strong bent toward expressing its genius by means of the printing press. Pages have been made to speak for God and to help in the propagation of the gospel. In spite of occasional lapses, Methodism has shown its faith in the child as a subject of Christian nurture. It might be suggested that one could trace Methodism through the course of its brief history by the marks of printer's ink which it has left behind. The Rev. Thomas Walter Herbert has given us an impressive picture of John Wesley as editor and author:<sup>1</sup>

The circumstances under which he performed his editorial tasks must certainly be unique in literary history. . . . Until he had reached the age of seventy he made his way about on horseback. . . . The spare moments of quiet before and after his four or five hours of sleep he customarily devoted to writing his journal, letters, controversial pieces, and other original productions. Sometimes he found opportunity in such odd moments to employ an abridging pen. . . . It must have been a remarkable sight, however familiar it became on the highways of England: a small man in scrupulously neat clerical dress, jogging somewhat awkwardly along the road, reins hanging loose on the horse's neck, a book in one hand and busy pencil in the other, marking through a word here, a phrase there, and a sentence or paragraph yonder, now and then writing in the margin or changing punctuation to suit the requirements of abbreviated sentences. Such was the principal editorial office of Methodism for the forty years ending in 1773. . . .

Of making many books there was no end, but a closed book is a mockery of wisdom. Believing that "reading Christians will be knowing

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Walter Herbert, *John Wesley as Editor and Author* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), pp. 3-4, 6, 121-22.



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Christians," he bent his energies toward opening books all over England. . . .

When he organized his Methodist Societies, he set up libraries for them and urged the purchase and reading of good books wherever he went. But he was continually plagued with well-intentioned people who held that the Holy Scripture was not only the best but the only worthwhile reading. As late as 1774 he found it necessary to combat such notions:

"In that and several other instances I take knowledge of Sarah Ryan's littleness of understanding: and this, as well as our temper, we ought to improve to the utmost of our power; which can no otherwise be done than by reading authors of various kinds as well as by thinking and conversation. If we read nothing but the Bible, we shall hear nothing but the Bible; and then what becomes of preaching?"<sup>2</sup>

By native gift and arduous training he was able to learn and sift critically the best that had been thought and said in the world. By virtue of his winning personality and the tremendous driving power of a consuming purpose, he was able effectively to propagate the best, as he saw it, among thousands of those who stood most in need of a competent critic.

It was not enough for Wesley merely to indicate the sources of literary beauty to his followers. Methodists were poor and unaccustomed to reading. He must provide cheap volumes to fit their financial capacities; he must provide simplified and explained writings to suit their educational limitations. . . .

John Wesley was personally responsible for three hundred and seventy-one separate publications. When it is recalled that one of these, *The Christian Library*, filled fifty volumes, that another, *The Arminian Magazine*, went through more than one hundred and fifty numbers while he was editor, and that it was a common experience for his separate books to run into upwards of a dozen editions each, one begins to realize what an enormous amount of printed matter he caused to be disseminated among English-speaking peoples. . . .

He not only preached, organized religious societies, personally assisted the physical needs of the poor, and set in motion a force which was destined to change the whole aspect of English society; but also . . . labored tirelessly and effectively to educate the poorer classes to the point where they might begin to enjoy the abundant pleasure and enlightening inspiration of great literature; he furnished an imposing body of poetry and prose for their consumption; and he made new and beautiful contributions to the literature of our tongue.

<sup>2</sup> *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley* (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), VI, 129-30.

Dr. Herbert has provided a brilliant assessment of the genius of Methodism's founder at the less-known point of his editorship. These amazing achievements were not wasted on Wesley's followers. They kept the literary genius aflame and extended the publishing activities which he launched. We have seen how his devotion to God took the form of helping the illiterate share the thoughts and aspirations set forth in great literature. Wesley's work as author and editor was one of the significant ways in which he co-operated with God to bring salvation to his fellow men. There was nothing obscurantist about the way Wesley launched his great religious movement. Methodism today has the same wide, free outlook and desire to learn.

Considerable progress was being made by the Methodist Sunday School Union in creating and distributing teaching and reading materials. However, it was just after the middle of the nineteenth century that a new surge of life and effort came about in this field.

In the 1870 *Methodist Almanac* we find a statement showing "The Design of the Methodist Episcopal Sunday School Union." Six purposes were listed:

1. The organization of Methodist Episcopal Sunday schools in localities where no such schools exist.
2. The supply of needy schools with books and requisites.
3. The provision of a pure, high toned evangelical Sunday school literature.
4. The improvement of schools already organized.
5. The training of Sunday school officers and teachers for their work.
6. The collection and diffusion of Sunday school intelligence throughout the Methodist Episcopal Church.\*

Note the importance in which teaching books and periodicals, reading materials and requisites are held. Since the Sunday school was definitely missionary in character, the stronger schools, through the Union, were to supply literature to the underprivileged. Following the lead of Wesley, the circulation and effective use of printed materials was of great importance in carrying out the purposes of the church.

The Methodist Sunday School Union carried on its work through four departments:

\* (Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis: Hitchcock & Walden, 1870), p. 9.

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1. *The Department of Benevolence.* Supplied by annual collections in the Churches. Grants of books, etc., are made to new and needy schools upon proper application made by pastor or presiding elder.

2. *The Department of Publication.* The Methodist Book Concern publishes for the Union such books, periodicals, and requisites as the Sunday school work demands. These publications are of two classes:

(1) The Sunday School Advocate and Sunday school library books.

...  
(2) The Sunday School Journal and Sunday school requisites—including books of instruction for scholars and teachers.

3. *The Department of Instruction.* . . . It provides a course of study for Sunday school teachers and candidates for the teacher's office. This course is divided into three classes: Preparatory, Junior, and Senior. It is also arranged in a more compact form for seminaries. . . .

4. *The Department of Sunday School Information.* . . . To prepare accurate statistical reports of the work in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and give the Church correct intelligence concerning the growth and present status of the work in all parts of the world.\*

Let us call attention to the participation of the pastor and the presiding elder in the distribution of literature and also to the close co-operation of the Union with The Methodist Book Concern. There are two divisions of Sunday-school materials: The *Sunday School Journal*, a periodical for teachers and officers. It was related to the publication of books for teachers and the instruction of scholars. *The Sunday School Advocate* was moving in the direction of becoming a magazine for pleasure and culture reading. It was related to the publication of books for Sunday-school libraries. This literature was expected to serve as a binder to strengthen the connectionalism of the church and to keep its membership intelligent concerning the wider aspects of the work of the denomination.

The American Sunday-School Union launched *The Sunday School Times* in 1859 as a professional journal for officers and teachers. Part of the story of the early years of this periodical is told us by Dr. Rice:

It was considered advantageous to have a special editor for a teachers' journal of this scope and for the preparation of periodicals for the young which the Society continued to issue. . . .

The embarrassing condition of the Society's finances, together with

\* *Ibid.*



the distracted condition of the country, led the managers of the Union after two years [in 1861] to transfer this publication to private parties [John S. Hart and others]. . . .

It gradually won its way under Dr. Hart, succeeded by Mr. Baker, and was later sustained by John Wanamaker as publisher, until it was again transferred in 1875 to H. Clay Trumbull and the Sunday-School Times Company.<sup>5</sup>

It has been financially difficult for Methodists to publish worthy professional journals for officers and teachers in the Sunday school. We are not surprised to find that it was necessary for *The Sunday School Times* to be turned over to private publishers.

In the 1868 *Year Book* of the Methodist Sunday School Union we find a long list of materials offered for sale. Here we note *The Child's Lesson Book*, *Questions on Proverbs*, Floy's *Lessons in Old Testament History*, *Lesson Leaves on "A Year With Moses"* written by Dr. Vincent.

In the materials dealing with the New Testament we find *The Child's Lesson Book*, *Consecutive Questions on Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John*.

Under the heading of miscellaneous materials we find *A Short Scriptural Catechism*, *Catechisms Numbers One, Two, and Three of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, *Pictorial Catechism*, *Curious and Useful Questions on the Bible*, *Questions on the Natural History of the Bible* [with a key] and other materials of this type.

For use with "Infant and Primary groups," we find *Alphabet Cards*, *Easy Lesson Book for Infant Scholars*, *Food for Lambs*, *Infant School Lesson Book*, *Picture Alphabet for the Lambs of the Flock*, *First Lessons in Spelling and Reading*, *New American Primer*, *Picture Papers, for Infant Classes and Little Children*, *Object Cards* (large pictures for the use of infant and juvenile classes, such as one entitled "Noah and the Dove"), *The Sunday-School Primer*, *The Sunday-School Spelling and Reading Book*, *Mammoth Lesson Leaf* (thirty-six by forty-six inches). We also note *First Year With Jesus*, *Picture Lessons* (each leaflet contains a picture for the infant scholar and a reading lesson on the back for the primary scholar); *Picture and Bold Text Lessons* (for use with the course *A Year With Moses*). The list of ma-

<sup>5</sup> Rice, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-66.

terials which we have been following concludes with an enthusiastic announcement:

LATEST SUNDAY-SCHOOL HELPS  
Vincent's Sunday School Lesson System.

I. TWO YEARS WITH JESUS

I. FIRST YEAR WITH JESUS. Historic Outline, Journeys and Miracles.

1. INFANT AND PRIMARY GRADES. These lessons are printed on two-paged leaflets, one side containing a picture for the infant, or non-reading scholar, the other side a Scripture lesson, hymn etc., for the little ones who are just able to read. . . .

2. THIRD GRADE, in a volume for scholars averaging from eight to sixteen years of age. . . . *Slate edition* of third grade has a slate on inside of last cover.

3. SENIOR GRADE, for teachers and older scholars. . . .

II. SECOND YEAR WITH JESUS. Parables, Conversations, and Discourses. . . . [Same four grades.]

II. A YEAR WITH MOSES

A new and beautiful series published in *the Sunday-School Journal* and in monthly LESSON LEAVES for scholars.

1. In the JOURNAL are Notes carefully prepared. . . .

2. THE LESSON LEAVES are prepared monthly. . . .

3. PICTURE AND BOLD-TEXT LESSONS for infant classes. . . .<sup>o</sup>

The list of materials kept for sale revealed that there was still demand for older items which were in the process of being eliminated. Many workers in the Sunday school were holding on to the old catechetical method. On the other hand the Union was pressing for better materials. The courses by Dr. Vincent were a long step forward in curriculum construction. The writer was especially interested to find small slates used in some of the pupils' books. This could have had real significance as an effort to give pupils a chance to express themselves in connection with their use of their lessons. It was about this time that the term *Berean Lessons* came into use. Doctor Vincent felt that daily Bible-reading in the home should be promoted by the Sunday

<sup>o</sup> *Annual Report on the Sunday-School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 1868.*

school. In order to aid this promotion he made use of an incident described in the seventeenth chapter of the book of Acts:

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things be so.  
—17:10-11

This incident seemed to give such strong support to the daily use of the Bible that the new courses being worked out under Dr. Vincent's direction were named after the Berean Christians. It turned out, however, that this title did not prove to be popular. Dr. Vincent's defense of them is worth quoting:

The Berean Lessons recognize the importance of a daily searching of the Scriptures. It is this which gives them their peculiar title; and the necessity of such diligent study of the Bible could hardly be more forcibly illustrated than by the bewilderment which this use of the word Berean has occasioned among some very respectable people, who had generally been credited with possessing considerable Scripture knowledge. The term, so appropriate for Bible lessons, has been woefully misunderstood.

To encourage this daily searching of the Bible, every one of the Berean Lessons has carefully-selected passages to be read by the scholars at home on each day of the week. These passages all bear on the lesson of the Sunday following. . . . An important connecting link can be made between the school and the family by using these lessons for home reading in connection with family prayer. . . . Each lesson has a "Golden Text," selected from some part of the Bible outside of the lesson, and containing in it the essential point of the entire lesson. This point is also expressed in a terse way in the "Golden Topic."

One objection to most series of lessons is the continuance of the same subject from the beginning of the year to its close, thus making the scholars, especially the younger ones, weary before the series ends. This objection is obviated in the Berean Lessons by a change of subject in every quarter, the subjects alternating from the Old Testament to the New. . . . It is assumed in the Berean Lessons that Christ is to be found in all parts of the Bible, and it is the aim of each lesson to point to Christ.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Annual Report on the Sunday-School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Year 1870*, pp. 42-43.



Dr. Vincent won his point, and the success of *The Berean Series* proved that he was right.

We have seen that the printing press, after its consecration to God and the service of the church, was a most effective instrument in setting forward the church's program of Christian teaching. If we give a fair appraisal to the more or less systematized materials that we have described, we might have to admit that work was being done during these years often equal to the contributions of church school editors today. It is easy to see that the Methodist Episcopal Church was well on its way to producing significant new curriculum materials.

### 13—SOMETHING NEW IN LESSON MATERIAL

It was due to the interest and ingenuity of Orange Judd that the first lesson leaves were devised. He was editor of *The Agriculturist* and an alert Sunday-school superintendent in a Methodist church located not far from New York City. As early as 1850 Dr. Judd was preparing topical lessons for his school with date, topic, and scripture passages. When his materials were well received in his own church, he published a list of lessons in *The Agriculturist*. The demand for these was so great that he had thousands of copies reprinted on sheets, or leaves, of paper and sold to many churches. In this connection we recall how Dr. Vincent printed some of his lessons in *The Northwestern Advocate* and reprinted them for distribution in the form of separate sheets. All through the years the lesson leaf has served a good purpose in the church school.<sup>1</sup>

In 1869 the National (later International) Sunday School Convention provided for the development of its own lessons, which were uniform in character. This had immediate effect upon the work the Methodists were doing. In fact, it brought a pause in

<sup>1</sup> See Wardle, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

their plans to issue the *Berean Lessons*. The Methodist Sunday School Union passed the following resolution:

That the further consideration of our Berean Lesson List for 1871, already announced to the public, be postponed four weeks, to afford an opportunity for consultation with committees from other Sunday School Unions and organizations in reference to a uniform course of Sunday school lessons for all the denominations in 1871.<sup>2</sup>

Several of the lesson-making groups were in such sharp competition that an agreement was very difficult. Mr. Eggleston and the supporters of *The National Series* insisted that these outlines be adopted by all the churches. With equal ardor Dr. Vincent and the Methodists pled for the *Berean Series*. A fairly satisfactory compromise was worked between the supporters of these two series, but it did not include all the other churches. The 1871 *Year Book* of The Methodist Sunday School Union carries this statement:

Arrangements having been effected with other Unions and publishers, the Normal Department has adopted the Uniform Series of Lessons for 1872, which is substantially a continuation of the Berean system. The lessons are chosen by a general committee, and all local committees or editors are left free to publish such notes, aids, etc., as they prefer. It is to be hoped that the approaching National Sunday School Convention will appoint a permanent COMMITTEE ON LESSONS, and that a curriculum of study extending through several years, and covering the Bible, will be chosen.<sup>3</sup>

What has just been reported was a significant step in the direction of having outlines co-operatively produced and then developed by the various churches into complete lesson material for their own use.

Meanwhile, changes in the Sunday-school literature of the Methodist Episcopal Church were taking place. As soon as it began to look as if uniform lessons would be generally adopted, the Methodists issued *The Eclectic Sunday School Library*, a volume designed to provide teaching helps for use with classes

<sup>2</sup> Annual Report for 1870. Quoted in Wardle, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>3</sup> Annual Report for 1871, pp. 73, 74. See Wardle, *ibid.*

of different ages. We quote from the introduction to the first volume:

This Eclectic Library—so wisely projected by the editor of the Sunday School Journal—is not designed to make teachers slaves to the views, modes, and opinions of others; but it aims to throw light on their path, to incite them to greater diligence in the study of the Word, and, by contact with great thoughts, to inspire them with a holy enthusiasm in their heavenly calling of building up souls in Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Today we have in *The International Lesson Annual*, published by Abingdon Press, a successor of *The Eclectic Library*. As one examines the *Year Book of 1871* he is struck with signs of progress in the creation of Sunday-school literature. Additions to the "Department of Sunday-School Requisites" include:

THE BEREAN QUESTION BOOK FOR 1872. . . . It is designed to supply the want of schools that prefer a *book* to the monthly lesson papers. Its subjects are those of the Uniform Series for 1872. . . . Interleaved edition, for the use of Superintendents and teachers. . . .

THE LESSON COMPEND FOR 1872 is the first volume of our new "Eclectic Sunday-School Library." The Compend contains condensed comments upon the lessons for 1872. . . .

THE LEAF CLUSTER FOR 1872, (FIRST QUARTER,) For General Review and Infant Classes, will be published in quarterly rolls. . . .

THE BEREAN DAY-BOOK FOR 1872. . . . A Pocket Diary. . . .; Daily Home Readings, Golden Text and Topic printed in full. . . .

THE HOME MANUAL. A beautiful little tract about "Home" and its power. . . .

BARTEAU'S SECRETARY'S RECORD. . . .

BIBLE ROLL. [Twenty-five large pictures.] A sort of Grand Leaf Cluster.

THE COUNTRY SUNDAY-SCHOOL. By J. H. Vincent. . . .

OUR LITTLE PEOPLE'S PICTURE ANNUAL FOR 1872. [Bound copies of The Picture and Lesson Paper.]

THE HOME ENVELOPE. . . . Designed to be sent to such families as are regarded as inaccessible by other means. . . . This large envelope contains Bible readings, and pictures of Bible subjects, and spelling lessons of Bible words, and also a few Bible questions.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See Wardle, p. 140.

<sup>5</sup> *Annual Report on the Sunday School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Year 1871*, pp. 62-65.



This is an impressive list of new, or virtually new, publications. Decades later church-school editors were bombarded with demands to issue periodically published lessons also in book form—a request which could not, for good reasons, be carried out. *The Home Envelope* described above has been used lately in experimental fashion to reach isolated families with teaching materials.

All publishers are concerned with postal rates. Those who issue printed materials for the church at the lowest possible prices find this a particularly difficult problem. In the Year Book for 1872 reference is made to this:

The General Conference ordered the publication of a *weekly* "Sunday-School Advocate"; but, in view of the heavy rates of postage which a "religious weekly" would be required to pay . . . the Agents and Editors decided to publish a new *monthly* paper, which, with the semi-monthly "Sunday-School Advocate" and the monthly "Good News," will meet the demand for a weekly Sunday-school paper. The new monthly will appear in April, 1873, and will be called The "Sunday-School Classmate." \*

We note that our present *Classmate* owes its launching partly to the exigencies of mailing costs. *Good News* was created to be circulated without cost to slaves who had been given their freedom.

By 1873 the various churches were using new lessons which they had developed from the International Lessons outlines prepared by the International Council. It seems that the new International Lessons were received with mixed feelings. Some remembered difficulties experienced in the past in co-operation with other denominations; others hated to see the Methodist materials entirely recalled. This led to a rather unusual announcement by the Normal Department of the Union:

On the first Sabbath in January, 1873, we shall inaugurate our new course of Sunday-School Lessons. The series will extend through at least seven years, and will comprise the lessons of the "International Series."

In addition to these Lessons our Normal Department has appointed a "supplemental" course for 1873, including "CATECHISM, No. 1" of

\* *Year-Book of the Sunday-School Union and of the Tract Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 1872*, p. 46.

our Church, "SPECIAL BIBLE LESSONS," [contained in small volumes of sixteen pages], and the "MEMORY SERIES" [four tiny vest-pocket volumes, containing "The Ten Commandments," "The Lord's Prayer," "The First Psalm," "The Twenty-Third Psalm," "The One Hundredth Psalm," "Choice Texts," "The Beatitudes," "The Apostles' Creed," and "Baptismal Covenant."]<sup>7</sup>

The report for this year mentions *The Normal Class* as a new magazine for advanced scholars. Lessons in the study of Hebrew appeared from time to time in the issues of this periodical. It seems that it was published for adults who were also being trained for teaching. It was a mixture of teacher and pupil material. *The Normal Class* kept in circulation only three years. After a short lapse *Classmate* was issued as a weekly in 1877. Such definite advances in the creation of church-school literature brought on considerable criticism. The editors and publishers also had their supporters. One of the most enthusiastic of these was N. S. Albright, whose tribute we discovered in *Methodism and Literature*:

The American Methodists have emulated the example of their Wesleyan brethren, and have published numerous valuable works, which invite and contribute to the better understanding of the divine Word. For a long time they relied almost exclusively upon their English republications. . . . Among the earliest books of an exegetical and practical nature was Joseph Longking's "Notes on the Gospels." This work was largely introduced into Sunday-schools, and met the wants of the Church at the time, so far as the Gospels were concerned. In 1848 the "Notes on the Acts of the Apostles," designed for Sunday-schools, Bible-classes, and private reading, was published by Rev. Bradford K. Peirce, now editor of *Zion's Herald*. . . .

The Rev. Dr. J. H. Vincent is the author of numerous minor books, which have been successfully employed as aids in the study of the Bible. Among these are his "Pictorial Bible Geography" and "Berean Lessons." . . . To him, also, we are indebted for the germinal concept which resulted in the adoption of the uniform international lesson system, an arrangement that gives us regularly, in almost every species of periodical, whole columns of Scriptural commentaries and religious instruction, a system that finds its culmination in the development of the "Chautauqua idea," which seeks as its object the universal diffusion of a whole-

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

some literature, a God-enthroned science, and a pure, sound, and stalwart evangelism.

After praising in the highest terms several of the periodicals, the tribute continues:

If, now, we add *The Study*—a quarterly magazine for superintendents, primary-class teachers, the Bible class, and normal class—a magazine *packed* with hints, facts, suggestions, outlines, and concise papers on needed topics, we have a series of Lesson Helps intended to meet the wants of all our Sunday-school workers. . . .

They are *our* helps. They present the catholic faith from *our* Methodist stand-point. They familiarize our Sunday-school scholars with the statements of Christian doctrine. They recognize the Methodist method of saving souls. They inculcate the Methodist definitions of religious belief, experience, and duty. . . .

There is much current sentimentalism concerning undenominational lesson helps. However, few are more taken in by this sentiment than such as have these undenominational wares for sale. . . . Even an undenominational writer must approach his theme from some point of view. Undenominational notes on Scripture must either be confined to threadbare truisms, or allowed to run into the absurdities of liberalism, of all dogmatisms the baldest, or they must fail to maintain the undenominational character.\*

What church editor today would not appreciate the solid support found in this statement. Beneath its enthusiasms we find certain basic facts. In a land with few books and periodicals and almost nothing religious in character to read outside the libraries of ministers, the various churches were circulating significant teaching and culture-reading materials. This was going to the rank-and-file of the people. It dealt with significant matters. It gave aid in understanding the Bible, the teachings of the church, the moral principles of living. Here was a valuable contribution to the culture and morals of the nation. As we have pointed out, the Sunday school and its literature accomplished much in the field of education in America. Unless one takes the time to gather and evaluate these materials he gains no idea of their volume and extent. Today if one kept a file of the church-school periodicals of special use to him, if these were bound each year, he might

\* *Methodism and Literature*, ed. F. A. Archibald (Cincinnati: Walden and Stowe, 1883), pp. 155-63, 202-3.



be surprised at the good start he has made in building a personal religious library. Besides this, the church school literature is a strong bond holding the constituency together in intelligent loyalty.

The accomplishments of the Methodist Episcopal Church up to this point in the story are indeed noteworthy. They command our admiration. Real pioneering was carried on in spite of criticism. The needs of people were coming to be understood and met as the years passed. However, before we further pursue this phase of our story, let us inquire into what was taking place in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

## 14—CURRICULUM-MAKING IN THE SOUTH

In 1844 the original Methodist Episcopal Church, after division, found itself existing as two denominations. One of the dividing groups kept the original title. The other proceeded to set up its own organization as the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. This is not the place to attempt to deal with the several causes which led to the division, but differences ran deeply. There was considerable delay in working out a satisfactory settlement relating to publishing interests and other properties. There was much confusion over the relationships between the activities of the two churches. All this worked to the damage of the new church bodies. In a few years a devastating war was to sap the strength of the larger body and all but destroy the membership and resources of the other. This goes to explain the check suffered in the progress of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the almost hopeless struggle carried on by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

The organizing General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, met in 1845. The meeting was little more than a convention of delegates sent from the supporting annual conferences. The first official General Conference was held in 1846.

It adopted the appropriate provisions in the *Discipline* of 1844, the last issued by the church before division. A motion to establish a Committee on Sabbath Schools, organize a Sabbath School Union, and publish a paper "suitable for Sabbath Schools" was laid on the table. This action was not satisfactorily explained in the record. We surmise that the situation was so confusing that it seemed inadvisable to undertake more than the formulating of the basic organization and getting it in motion.

We learn from the *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, for 1850* that

A resolution of the Mississippi Conference, in regard to the establishment of a Monthly Periodical, to be devoted to Biblical Literature, was presented and referred to the Committee on Books and Periodicals.<sup>1</sup>

Later in the session this committee recommended that

A Sunday-school Journal shall be published at the Eastern Depository, [probably, Richmond, Virginia] and the editor of the said Journal shall be the editor of Sunday-school books.<sup>2</sup>

This was approved. The Committee on Sunday Schools of the General Conference brought in a report as follows:

The Committee . . . have had under consideration the recommendations of several conferences to establish a Sunday-school Department in the Book Concern, and to publish a Sunday-School Journal.<sup>3</sup>

The recommendation was approved and an editor was appointed "whose duty it shall be to edit a periodical devoted to our Sunday-school interests, and also to edit the Sunday-school publications generally."<sup>4</sup> The organization of a Sunday School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was also recommended, but no action seems to have been taken.

The General Conference of 1854 provided an "editor for the Lady's Companion and Sunday School Visitor; and an editor for Sabbath School Books, Tracts, and Books of the General Catalogue." The Committee on Sabbath Schools also made a strong report to the conference:

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1850*, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 168-69.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

We are satisfied that to a very great extent the future success of all Evangelical Churches, especially in the older States and more established congregations, must and will be in almost exact proportion to the wise and Scriptural indoctrination of the youthful mind; and that this seeding of the mind must be effected chiefly in the nursery and in the Sunday School. . . . In such portions of our great field of labor, we must look for sound conversions more as the blessed sequence of a system of thorough religious education, than as the result of those sudden and overwhelming conversions which characterized those times when such training was impossible. . . .

Proper religious education must precede and underlie a strong Scriptural Christianity. . . .

The great duty inculcated upon us in the holy Scriptures, of imparting to our children a thorough course of religious instruction, can be better performed through the instrumentality of Sunday Schools than in any other way. . . .

*Resolved.* . . . That we recommend a more systematic use of catechisms in our Sunday Schools; and . . . the formation of infant classes, for the training of the very young; and of Bible Classes . . . for the benefit of teachers and senior scholars. . . .

That . . . this General Conference do now proceed with the formation of a Sunday School Society.<sup>5</sup>

In what we have just quoted, the terms, "Sabbath school" and "Sunday school" are used interchangeably. In both the northern and southern churches there seems to have been little distinction between the two. Some years were to elapse before the term, "Sunday school" would be used without exception. The idea that the most effective conversion may come after religious nurture is also asserted.

Article IX in the "Constitution of the Sunday School Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," is quoted here as printed in the 1854 *Discipline*:

*Publication*—The publication of all Sunday School books and periodicals shall be under the immediate direction of the Editor appointed by the General Conference, and the Book Agents of the M. E. Church, South.<sup>6</sup>

This report, signed by Lovick Pierce, was passed.

<sup>5</sup> *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1854*, pp. 281-83.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 285.



From the *Journal of the General Conference of 1858* we learn of the appointment of an editor for *Home Circle*, "who shall also be editor of the Sunday-School Visitor." We turn aside from our story to report also that in this same copy of the *Journal* we found minutes of a rather lively debate:

The Rev. William Mulkey . . . has discovered a system of orthoëpy [a scheme of pronunciation]. It is believed that the introduction of this System into our Mission and Sabbath Schools will be advantageous.<sup>7</sup>

We infer that no action was taken. This seemed to be a strange subject to be debated in a General Conference.

The Sunday School Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, having been organized in 1855, held its first anniversary at McKendree Church, Nashville, Tennessee. At one of the sessions Bishop Andrew made an address in which he said:

It [is] important to teach Christianity to the children. If wrong principles are to be eradicated and right ones inculcated, childhood is the hopeful age in which to begin the work. The Sunday-school is important to the grown-up members of the Church. Christians are not apt to grow in grace unless they *work*. . . . Persons who faithfully attend Sunday-schools, and industriously endeavor to teach the children the way of life, are not so liable to spiritual decline as others.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time and place the Joint Publishing Board, which was composed of the Book Committee and the Publishing Agent, met at the Methodist Publishing House. It was reported that *Home Circle* was losing circulation, and it was decided to add sixteen pages and improve the illustrations. *The Sunday School Visitor*, referred to as

this sweet little messenger of truth and grace, sent monthly to the children of the Church . . . to whom it carries tidings of life, peace and joy

was also being published at a loss. *The Sunday School Visitor* was first published at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1854. In Volume I, No. 2, we find a "report on a Meeting of the Tennessee Con-

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 574.

<sup>8</sup> *Annals of Southern Methodism for 1856*, ed., Rev. Charles F. Deems. (Nashville: Stevenson & Owen, 1857), II, 154-55.

ference on Sunday schools" in which this statement is made: "The Tennessee Conference was held at Athens, Ala., Oct. 23, [1850]. . . . It was a pleasant session."

After giving rather discouraging information about the work, the report reflected concern over the Sunday-school literature. It went on to say:

We are deeply and solemnly convinced of the *pressing importance* of providing suitable publications for the religious instruction of the children of our charge. . . . Once flourishing schools have greatly declined or ceased to exist. The sappers and miners [a military reference] are at work on every side and multitudes of our little ones may be left to perish or stray from our fold without increased facilities of instruction are provided for them. . . . [Therefore be it,]

*Resolved*, that we will earnestly and immediately endeavor to put the *Sunday School Visitor* in every family within our respective bounds, and especially see that all the Sunday Schools under our care shall be supplied with it.<sup>9</sup>

It was not possible to hold the General Conference of 1862 because the Civil War was in progress. That fact in itself showed the confusion which had seized upon the work of the church, as upon all phases of life in the South. The report of the Committee on Sunday Schools to the General Conference of 1866 criticized severely the Sunday School Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and recommended that it be abolished. The Committee recommended

that the annual conferences, by such agencies as they may severally adopt, shall collect and forward funds to the Book Agent, to be employed by him as a special fund, and for no other purpose, in enriching, illustrating, cheapening, and rendering attractive our Sunday-school publications.<sup>10</sup>

One might infer that the collections were small and there seemed to be a need to take direct action to safeguard the Sunday-school publications. The Committee also recommended that:

The General Conference sanctions the publication of a regular pro-

<sup>9</sup> *Sunday School Visitor*, Vol. I, No. 2, 1851.

<sup>10</sup> *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, for 1866*, p. 82.

gressive *series* of catechisms, graduated to the several stages of the learners . . . setting forth, in compact form, the facts, history, and doctrines of the Scriptures; and, in the more advanced numbers of the series, giving especial prominence to the distinctive doctrines of *Wesleyan theology* . . . the series closing with a separate number, defining and explaining the leading features of the government, usages, and economy of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.<sup>11</sup>

The report recommended that *The Sunday School Visitor*, no longer being issued, "be resuscitated." The writer was able to locate two copies of the *Southern Methodist Almanac*. The issue for 1855 was published by Stevenson and Owen, Nashville, Tennessee. The usual features contained in an almanac must have been reprinted from the issue of that date of the *Methodist Almanac* published by the Methodist Episcopal Church. This issue contained information concerning the Tract Society, Sunday School Society, and Missionary Society of the Southern Church; also concerning three types of "cheap Sunday-school and family libraries" then in use.

The *Almanac* for 1861 was edited by the Sunday School Editor at Nashville and was made up almost entirely of different materials from those issued at Cincinnati, Ohio. The "Sunday-School Text Books" listed were:

*Southern Methodist Primer, Wesleyan Catechisms*: No. I. for children of tender years. No. II. For children of seven years of age and upward. No. III. On the Evidences of Christianity. . . . For families and Bible-classes.<sup>12</sup>

There were two scripture catechisms written by the editor of Sunday-school materials. A special catechism was prepared

for the use of the Methodist Missions. . . . Part I., [dealing with the subject] comprehending the Elements of Christianity. . . . Part II., containing a brief Outline of the History of Redemption. [Listed also were question books on the Bible and Sunday School Reward Tickets.]<sup>13</sup>

In 1871 the periodicals in use in the Sunday schools were *The Sunday School Visitor*; *Our Little People* (first issue); *The*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *The Southern Methodist Almanac* for 1861, p. 51.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*



*Sunday School Magazine* (first issue) ; and *Lesson Papers* (first issue). The International Uniform Lessons were not put into use until 1876 in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. . .

In 1881 *Lesson Papers* had been succeeded by *The Lesson Quarterly*. Later this became *The Sunday School Quarterly*, and finally *The Senior Quarterly*. *Infant Class* was launched in 1881 and was published for two years. *The Illustrated Lesson Paper* and *The Intermediate Quarterly* were also issued at this time.

The four decades of history of the Methodist Episcopal Church following the separation of the churches in 1844 is meager in many of its accomplishments. We note, however, a strong determination to supply teaching materials to the membership through the Sunday school. The leaders believed in Christian teaching. In our next chapter we shall see how some of the strongest and most prophetic declarations concerning the importance of Christian nurture are voiced in the midst of a most depressing church situation.

## 15—IN DEFENSE OF THE CHILD

E. B. Chappell reminds us that

The Churches in the South found themselves compelled to return to the methods that had prevailed during pioneer days, and there followed a period of reaction. . . . The revival again came to be thought of by our preachers, as well as by the rank and file of our lay members, as the chief agency for building the Kingdom and of the conversion of adults as the chief way of making disciples. It came about also that many of the great revivalists of this period were stanch Calvinists and that a large proportion of our preachers, as well as our people, fell under the influence of Calvinistic theology. And so Christian education, instead of being interpreted in the old-time Methodist sense of preparation through a vital process of nurture and training for being recognized as "members of Society," came to be regarded as nothing more than preparation for a future conversion.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chappell, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

At the meeting of the Book Committee held in August, 1857, Richard Abbey was elected as one of the editors. This man gave expression to convictions much like those which had been voiced by Horace Bushnell several decades before. His book entitled *Christian Cradlehood; or, Religion in the Nursery*, has long been out of print. It is to preserve some of Abbey's most striking statements that we are quoting liberally from it. Let us remember that men steeped in theology may furnish prophetic leadership in support of Christian nurture. We have learned that the two areas of thought are not opposed to each other. The deeper insights of Christian theology move thinkers to realize the close relation of the God-concept to the principle of growth. Abbey says, as he speaks of original sin:

On the one hand, we have the doctrine that children are born pure, holy, upright, and that they learn wickedness, and so become sinners by mere contact and association. . . .

On the other hand, we have the teaching that children are born sinners, and necessarily grow up sinners, and can only be regenerated after they attain to age sufficient to enable them to understand the Christian system of redemption by Christ crucified.

The truth lies between these two extremes. It is very true that vicious association promotes sinfulness greatly. . . .

Leaving out of the question right here the pure, original state, and the fall of man in Adam, when we look at man as he *is*, we see him subject to the same law of fruit, product, or result, as are the lower animals. . . .

There is obviously *something* in him that causes this universal depravity. Whether he inherits it from a near or remote ancestry as remote as Adam, or imbibes it from his fellow by association, or from all these sources . . . the thing is here. . . . Things without an apparent cause we call natural. So we call universal sinfulness natural. But while this badness is universal, it is not true that every thing in every man is bad. . . .

Now, how does this universal badness apply to children? and when does it begin to operate?

A tendency to sin is seen from the first; but there is a period—perhaps from six to nine or twelve months or more—of nearly or quite absolute nonage. In that period he is no more capable of sin than is a parrot. The habit of doing may be established in him, but he is no more a sinner than he is a walker or a talker. He is neither, because he has never walked, talked, nor sinned. . . . You may say that he is in a

sinful state—that is, a tendency to sin is in him just as a tendency to bark is in a dog so young that he has never barked.

When old enough to be capable of doing wrong he begins to do wrong. . . . But is there no escape . . . ? Are we absolutely shut up to this necessity? If so, then how long *must* this bitter fruit [of sinfulness] continue? It ought to be changed from bad to good at the very earliest period possible under the laws of divine grace. How long *must* it continue? But we are told that “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from *all* sin.” And this early sin is not only a part of a sinful life, but by far the most important part of it. And is there no remedy for this vitally important part of sin-life? To suppose it impossible for divine grace to reach sin at this or any other period of life, or any other conditions of life, is, it would seem, to rob the Saviour of some of the laurels attributed to him in the Bible. . . .

Six months of sinful life, in, say the second or third year, is more damaging than the same length of sinning at any other period. This is the formative period. And no grace adequate to it? Well, there ought to be; and there *is*. . . .

There is no graceless period in childhood. Grace is unceasingly continuous in childhood as in youthhood and manhood. We restrict it when we suppose it to “begin” after awhile as the intellect opens.

I know of no natural reason why a child may not feel divine love as early as he is capable of feeling parental love. . . . There is nothing in either nature or grace that inhibits its early beginning. Natural depravity appertains no more to cradle-life than to youth or manhood. . . . The grace of Christ meets it in the cradle precisely as it does in later years. . . .

But how frequently . . . do we fail to even attempt to inculcate Christianity at this tender period of life! The child of two, three, or four years, is generally treated as utterly incapable of religion, as much so as a brute animal. . . .

While I would not underrate them [camp meetings and revivals], I would declare my belief that the nursery, properly used, possesses tenfold the converting means of all the former put together. . . . Most children of religious families, or at least many of them, were converted in the nursery, and their religious state was neglected afterward. Most of the people we preach to are backsliders.

By proper training a child ought to grow up a converted Christian, and not be able to remember to have been otherwise. This doctrine is as old as the Bible. . . . It is said of the great and good Richard Baxter that he became much troubled because he could not recollect when he he was converted. But he saw that home-education and nursery training



were as properly means of converting grace as the preaching at church, and thenceforward contented himself with the sweeter reflection that he had learned to love God early.”<sup>2</sup>

One is struck by the fact that what is said here is not very different from what the group of ministers mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this book were saying. The basic Methodist position of universal salvation, available to all of every age and taking many forms, will not die out in the church no matter how great the pressure of those who oppose it. We cannot fathom the divine purpose; neither can we attempt to set limits upon the saving grace of God. This church defends the right of the young to Christian nurture, believing that all the basic changes in persons included in the term will come to pass. The writer chose the title *Child and Church* for this book with this in mind.

As we have suggested, in the area of religious education there was a general recession during and after the Civil War. This was true particularly in the South. Teaching material was usually in the form of catechisms and called for memorization with the usual rewards and discipline. The outlook was pessimistic and lent itself to gloomy concepts of human nature, especially the status of the child. This brings out all the more sharply the statements concerning “Christian cradlehood” which we have quoted. There were persons true to the basic insights of Methodism not afraid to voice their convictions.

About the beginning of the twentieth century another educational prophet appeared on the scene. He was James Atkins, who, before his elevation to the episcopacy, was Sunday School Editor. In nine basic statements Dr. Atkins set forth the attitude of Jesus toward childhood:

1. *Whoever would Enter the Kingdom must Become Childlike in Order Thereto.*
2. *Whoever, having Entered the Kingdom, would Become Great in it, must Continue Child-like.*
3. *To Receive the Child is to Receive Christ.*
4. *The Little Ones Shall Not be Despised.*
5. *“But who so shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” [Matt. 18:5.]*

<sup>2</sup> Richard Abbey, *Christian Cradlehood* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1881), pp. 89-104.

6. "Suffer [or allow] the little children to come." [Matt. 19:14.]
7. "And forbid them not." [Matt. 19:14.]
8. "For of such is the kingdom of heaven." [Matt. 19:14.]
9. "That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father." [Matt. 18:10.] \*

The exposition of these statements formed the core around which Dr. Atkins built his impressive pleas for the central place of the child and the qualities of childhood in the kingdom of God which we find in *The Kingdom in the Cradle*. Needless to say this book wielded a wide influence over the church. Bishop Atkins was so skillful in showing that the place of childhood is central in the Christian fellowship that his readers wondered how they could have missed something so clearly implicit in the Christian gospel.

A worthy successor to Dr. Atkins as Sunday School Editor of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was E. B. Chappell. He, along with his predecessor, was a fellow prophet in pressing the claims of the child upon the home and church for Christian nurture. Among many insights into the matter, Dr. Chappell set forth the interpretation of conversion, freedom in taking God in faith, and the central place of love in the process of being continually saved. We take a few excerpts from his book, *Evangelism in the Sunday School*:

There are many who hold that it [this transforming power] is communicated by a process that is akin to magic [sacramentalism]. . . . There are others who think of spiritual life as mechanically imparted as a result of conformity with certain legalistic requirements or of the intellectual acceptance of certain credal statements. There are wide divergencies of opinion among those maintaining these views as to what observances and beliefs are required, but they agree in interpreting religion in terms either of legalism or intellectualism; and the positions which they hold . . . necessarily involve the assumption that spiritual life may be arbitrarily and mechanically communicated. . . .

We escape all the errors mentioned above when we come to think of salvation in terms of positive moral and spiritual attainment by free personal agents and of religion as a means through which free agents are enabled to achieve Christ-like character and fit themselves for Christ-like service. . . . Spiritual life is not a semi-material some-

\* Atkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 89, 95, 96, 97, 98, 108, 109, 113.

thing which exists apart from personality; it is rather a quality of personality and can be communicated and received only by vital processes that are in accord with the laws which condition the life of free personal agents. . . .

These considerations suggest the secret of all spiritual attainment. The soul is cleansed and quickened by the birth from above, the gift of divine life through the Holy Spirit, and we come into the possession of this gift through an immediate personal relation with God. . . .

The only thing that can vitally unite person with person is faith, a twofold bond of trust and love. . . . The faith that saves is not the intellectual acceptance of a creed, but loving trust in and self-committal to a Person. . . .

There are millions of people who do not regard themselves as Calvinists, but whose views in regard to such important matters as child nature and child nurture and the meaning, conditions, and consequences of the new birth are nevertheless largely determined by Calvinistic presuppositions. . . . It is time that Methodists . . . were ridding themselves of the lingering influence of this monstrous survival of medieval theology and fully and intelligently accepting all the implications of their Arminian creed. . . .

It is not claimed that early Methodist theologians saw and accepted all the implications of the Arminian creed which they adopted. The Church in which they grew up had been dominated for more than a thousand years by the theology of Augustine, and it would have been practically impossible for them all at once entirely to rid themselves of its influence. But they rejected its fundamental contentions and at least pointed out to their successors the direction in which the theological thought of the future was bound to move. . . .

The position which I am here maintaining . . . has been held by our Methodist fathers from the very beginning. . . . Dr. Richard Watson, one of the great theologians of early Methodism said: "We are bound to conclude that the kingdom of heaven in some sense is composed of them (little children). They are the subjects and partakers of its blessings; and if they are the subjects of his spiritual kingdom on earth, then, until the moment that by actual sin they bring personal condemnation upon themselves, they remain heirs of the kingdom of eternal glory: and if they become subjects of the latter dying, then a vital relation must have existed on earth between them and Christ, their Redeemer and Sanctifier." 4

It would seem that the crisis in religious education through

4 E. B. Chappell, *Evangelism in the Sunday School* (Nashville: Publishing House M. E. Church, South, 1925), pp. 21-25, 52-55.



which our workers were passing led to deep searching of spirit and to efforts to gain insight into the divine purpose. Prophets rose to speak for God and the place of the child in the kingdom of God. This tended to balance the meager progress made by those who faced overpowering difficulties brought on by the separation of the churches and the War Between the States.

In religious education, however, within the three branches of Methodism later to unite, progress was being made, which deserves our attention.

### 16—VARIOUS DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DIFFERENT CHURCHES

An examination of the minutes of the Book Committee of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, shows some of the struggles through which the Publishing House passed during some three decades after the end of the Civil War. Federal troops occupied the building at Nashville, doing immense damage. More than once the business approached the point of insolvency. It took strong courage to keep operating when there seemed to be little hope that times would get better and business improve. In 1871, with almost audacious confidence, the Book Committee adopted the following resolution:

That we deem it important to the interests of our Church and especially to the world, and the religious improvement of the children of the Church, to furnish from our own publishing house suitable books for our Sunday school libraries, and we hereby urge the agent to add as rapidly as possible to the catalogue of new publications for our Sunday schools.

At this time, in addition to *The Sunday School Visitor*, *Our Little People*, *The Sunday School Magazine*, and *Lesson Papers*, the agent reported the publication of a Sunday-school music book under the title of *Amaranth*. The title refers to a fadeless

flower and must have had a significance then which this writer has not been able to trace. We have indicated that there was some reluctance on the part of the Southern church to adopt the International Uniform Lessons released by the International Lesson Committee in 1873. In a short time this attitude changed, and in 1878 we see the Book Committee congratulating the Sunday School Editor and Secretary "on the introduction of the International helps into our system of uniform lessons."

The difficulties under which the Sunday School Editor and his helpers did their work is almost beyond the power of us to-day to understand. An illustration of the straitened condition is found in the criticism of the editor when he, in desperation, obtained an assistant on his own initiative after failing to get the consent of the Publishing Committee. The minutes of the committee tell us:

After a statement from the Sunday School Editor in answer to questions from the chair and others the following resolution was unanimously adopted—"Whereas the Book Committee has approved for the Sunday School Department this year the sum of \$4,400 over and above the amount appropriated to that department heretofore, therefore, *Resolved*, that the office of the assistant Sunday school editor be abolished and the Sunday school editor be relieved of all the work of proof-reading in the Department."

Times were so desperately hard that it was not possible to provide an assistant for the editor. The only relief for this burdened worker was to secure someone to read proof for him. The situation began to improve soon. It became possible for the editor to give himself more fully to the creation of policies and providing general supervision to his exacting and complex task. Under better working conditions and with a more nearly adequate staff, the editorial operations made progress. By 1906 the following periodicals were in circulation: *Children's Visitor* (successor to *Sunday School Visitor*), *Our Little People*, *Sunday School Magazine*, *Intermediate Quarterly*, *Senior Quarterly*, *Junior Lessons* (a quarterly succeeding *Illustrated Lesson Paper*), *Home Department Quarterly*, and *Olivet Picture Cards*. All these publications carried International Uniform Lessons. As Dr. Chappell, who was Sunday School Editor at this time, tells us:

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Since there was, at that time, no immediate prospect of securing a graded lesson course, the only way of advance was by the securing of writers for the material for each age group who had sufficient experience in dealing with the group to enable them to adapt, as far as possible, the treatment of the lessons to the capacities and needs of those for whose use they were designed and to offer helpful suggestions to teachers in regard to teaching methods and class management.

Such a line of advance had been practically impossible prior to this time because of the fact that specialization in religious education was still in its infancy, and therefore but few trained departmental workers had been available as lesson writers. Now, however, the number had sufficiently increased to open the way for the employment of specially prepared writers for both pupils and teachers in the various departments of the Sunday school. . . . At the same time sections were added to the *Magazine* [the magazine for teachers and officers] containing special helps for teachers of each department and in the section of general articles were published discussions of such subjects as the characteristics of the age groups, religious pedagogy, the place of worship in the development of a spiritual life, class management and activities, and general Sunday school organization and administration.<sup>1</sup>

By 1910 a periodical entitled *Primary Teacher*, designed especially for those who worked with children, was in circulation as were also *Boys and Girls*, a story paper for children and *Adult Student*, a monthly for adults. After years of struggle the Sunday-school literature was on its way.

It has been extremely difficult for the writer to secure satisfactory information concerning the noteworthy achievements of the Methodist Protestant Church in the field of teaching materials. When this church was formed, through its separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1821, it was able at first to develop only limited facilities and staff. The periodicals issued were, as the record shows, "of the Advocate type." We assume that many Sunday schools made use of materials from independent sources, principally the American Sunday-School Union. Naturally this was fertile field for independent publishers also.

By 1884 the Pittsburg Directory [or publishing house] was publish-

<sup>1</sup> Chappell, *Recent Development of Religious Education in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, pp. 70-71.



ing: *Our Morning Guide* (a 4-page weekly); *Scholars' Quarterly* (32 pages); *Our Teachers' Journal* (64-page quarterly); *Bible School Leaf* (monthly); and *Our Children* (4-page weekly). . . . The Baltimore Directory [the other publishing house of the Church] was issuing a series of helps covering the International Lessons. . . . In that year the two Directories reached an apparent agreement whereby all the Sunday school periodicals were to be issued by the Pittsburg Directory.<sup>2</sup>

During this same period, Christian teaching in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, as we have noted, was going through sore trials. One report of the Committee on Sunday schools, however, expressed optimism.

The Sunday school aims to lay the foundation of a natural and rational development of the entire capabilities of the pupil. . . . Let intellect and sensibilities go hand in hand. . . . The heart of the modern Church has been renovated, and childhood has been taken into its embrace. . . . We realize the purport of the prophecy that "kings shall become nursing fathers, and their queens nursing mothers." . . . The great aim [of teaching] is not mere catechetical instruction . . . but to lead childhood to Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

An examination of the yearbooks of the Methodist Episcopal Sunday School Union for the last decades of the nineteenth century show that in 1884 Dr. Vincent had set up an organization of young people which he called "The Oxford League." This agency provided for

two grades of reading, as follows: The Initial Grade—chapters from the gospels and Acts, Church history, Methodism . . . The Second Grade—Paul's Epistles, Methodist history, doctrines, the sacraments, Protestantism, etc.<sup>4</sup>

In 1889 a delegated convention representing five young people's organizations met in Cleveland, Ohio. Here the Epworth League of the Methodist Episcopal Church was formally organized. It was

<sup>2</sup> Batten, *op. cit.*, pp. 200-201.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of General Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1878*, pp. 186-88.

<sup>4</sup> *Year Book, Methodist Episcopal Church, 1885*.

designed to embrace all our young people, and to promote in them a spiritual, intelligent, loyal and working Christian character.<sup>5</sup>

The *Year Book* for 1889 reported a special mass meeting on behalf of the Epworth League. Among other things the first speaker on the program had this to say:

The Epworth League is a young people's society. . . . You cannot just tell what these young folks are going to develop into. The laws of restraint sit as loosely upon them as clothes upon a baby. . . .

I rode forty miles one morning in California behind a team of six horses. The head ones were two mustangs. They seemed to be full of springs, and jumped all the way. I thought that the young people of the Church were like those mustangs. They are the leaders, the ones to go ahead of the staid old pole-horses. They would not make good pole-horses, they would kick the dash-board down. The pastor needs to keep the line on them.<sup>6</sup>

It is pleasant to contrast such appreciation of the initiative of the younger Christians with the repressive attitude toward youth shown by many religious leaders during preceding decades. Here was a dynamic organization designed to afford the youth of the church ways of expressing their growing outlooks and convictions. In 1892 the Department of Instruction of the Union reported the publication of *The Epworth Herald* as the organ of the Epworth League movement in the denomination. In a few years the Epworth League organization was set up by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, with *The Epworth Era* as its organ. These periodicals will figure with considerable prominence in later chapters of our story.

In the *Year Book* of the Sunday School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 1902 an imposing list of publications for the Sunday school is presented—*The Classmate*, *The Sunday School Advocate*, *The Picture Story Paper* (for younger children) *Berean Beginner Lesson Quarterly* (for "grades next above the primary grade"), *The Boys' and Girls' Lesson Quarterly* (for the same grade), *Berean Intermediate Lesson Quarterly*, *Illustrated Berean Lesson Quarterly*, *The Lesson Leaf* (for intermediates), *Senior Berean Lesson Quarterly*, *The Lesson Handbook*

<sup>5</sup> Wardle, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>6</sup> *Year Book* of the Sunday-School Union and of the Tract Society of the M. E. Church for 1889, p. 10.

(annual), *The Young People's Lesson Book* (annual), *Bible Study Home Department Quarterly*, *Primary and Beginner Teacher*, *The First Lesson Book* (grade above primary), *Berean Lesson Pictures*, *Leaf Cluster*, *Journal and Bible Student's Magazine*.<sup>7</sup>

Between 1872 and 1908 the International Uniform Lessons held sway over most of the Sunday-school materials in use. We have seen how the Methodist Episcopal Church maintained in circulation some of its old materials when the uniform lessons were adopted and how the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, delayed its adoption of the materials for several years. It seems that the Methodist Protestant Church adopted the lessons promptly. By the end of the nineteenth century periodicals for the Sunday school were springing up. To some degree the setback occasioned by the Civil War was being overcome. During this period The Epworth League came into being and was to develop into a potent organization for Methodist youth. However, a strong movement in the direction of providing graded lessons for the Sunday school had begun, as we shall see in the next chapter.

## 17—GRADED LESSONS FOR GOD'S GRADED PERSONS

A supporter of vital teaching materials once voiced this affirmation:

Those whom God has graded,  
Let not man try to make uniform.

There have been times when this rearrangement of one of the phrases in the wedding ceremony had more than ordinary significance.

We do well to give full credit to the valuable influence of the

<sup>7</sup> See *Year Book*, 1902.



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development of uniform lessons upon the teaching situation which existed during a large part of the nineteenth century. They had delivered the Sunday school from the chaos of competing systems of teaching. Had this not been done, this institution might have lost much of its value to the churches. A religious literature was being widely used in America. Within the limits prescribed, it was helping the rank and file of church members to understand the Bible. In a commentary published in 1890 we find this statement of high praise:

The adoption of the Uniform Lessons was a great step toward Christian unity and for efficiency and thoroughness in the study of the Bible. More eyes than ever before have been turned upon the sacred page; more Bibles have been circulated; more and better expositions have been prepared and published, and even the Bible itself has been investigated as never before to throw its light upon the interpretation of Scripture.<sup>1</sup>

Statements of this type contain much that is true. It is certainly no reflection on what those who brought about the use of uniform lessons have accomplished to add that the very success of their efforts may have increased the sensitivity of Christian teachers to the needs and limitations of the pupils in the Sunday school.

One of the first doubts expressed about the uniform lessons had to do with their failure to include many important sections of the Bible. The International Lesson Committee limited the making of outlines largely to Bible narratives so that each lesson could be stretched, or adapted, to bring it within range of all students, from small children to older adults. By limiting the scope of the lessons in this way, the Committee disregarded some of the scripture passages of very great meaning to Christians today. This criticism grew in force until a thorough and scientific analysis of the Uniform Lessons used in the Sunday schools from 1873 to 1924 was made.

Luther A. Weigle, in an analysis of the Uniform Lessons, points out that only one sixth of the books of prophecy and less than one eighth of the Poetic and Wisdom literature have been selected. He states further, in commenting on the book of Amos, that out of the ten lessons

<sup>1</sup> From Hurlbut and Doherty, *Introduction to Illustrative Notes, A Guide to the Study of the Sunday School Lesson*. Quoted in Lankard, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

assigned to this book of prophecy, in reality, only three give Amos his true historical place, or enable the students to understand or grasp his real message. In comparison to this small number of lessons from the Poetic, Wisdom, and Prophetic literature of the Bible, a relatively large amount of narrative material has been used.<sup>2</sup>

In the tables prepared under Dr. Weigle's direction, showing the verses from the New Testament used in the Uniform Lessons, we discover that 4,882 verses came from Acts, 2,558 from Luke, 2,012 from Matthew 1,519 from Mark, 1,489 from John. Material taken from the epistles of the New Testament amounted to 11.4 per cent of their total content.<sup>3</sup>

The narrative portions of the Bible are important; they need to be used in the Sunday school. The other passages of scripture also have great importance. When use is made of narratives because they are easier to adapt to the capacities of persons varying widely in age, the effect is unfortunate. In supplying "milk for babes," adults may be fed on baby food.

Widespread criticism brought the supporters of the uniform lessons to a defensive attitude. Full perfection was claimed for lessons based on uniformity. To raise even the slightest question concerning them was to "shake the Ark of the Covenant" and court the wrath of God. When the time came to choose a new International Lesson Committee some fear was felt for the safety of the old ways of doing things. In an address delivered before the Convention of 1896 the Executive Committee said:

This convention has a most important work to do. It will choose a new Lesson Committee, who are to select the lessons which are to be studied in the closing years of this century and the first five years of the twentieth century. . . . The agitation of the question, and the opposition to the plan [of uniform lessons] has failed to remove it from the place it has long occupied in the minds and hearts of Sunday School workers. Even the recent demand on the part of a few for a separate course for the Primary Department, has less support now than it had a year or two ago.<sup>4</sup>

G. M. Boynton had this to say concerning denominational co-operation:

<sup>2</sup> Lankard, *ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, appendix.

<sup>4</sup> Report of the Executive Committee to the Eighth International Sunday School Convention of 1896, p. 87.

*Denominations!* They are good enough in their way. *Christ!* He is the name which is above every name. . . . Competition between those who bear His name is their common Denominator! It is a shame to mention it, unless it be that honorable competition which is eager to do its full part in the work he has left the disciples to do.<sup>5</sup>

H. M. Hamill made a very strong statement in the 1902 International Sunday School Convention in his address on "The Bible—Our Text-Book." We quote some of his statements:

"In these latter days [just preceding this Convention], however, the element of the supernatural in the Bible has had the rude hand of a baptized infidelity laid upon it. . . .

Do you know the origin of the uniform Bible lesson? . . . Its genesis was not in the fertile brain of Vincent and the loving heart of B. F. Jacobs. . . . But the "uniform International lesson" is as old as the Tabernacle itself. The roots of it are in the Pentateuch. . . . In the thirty-first chapter of Deuteronomy, the latest deliverance of Moses, God's viceregent, was given: . . . "Gather the people together, men, and women, *and children* . . . that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law." Men, women, and children were brought together. The word of the law was read to them—made plain to them collectively, without discrimination or differentiation except as mother love, with the child at her side, would simplify it. . . . God started his course of Bible study after that ancient fashion. . . .

Then take, finally, that theory of modern education which demands that the Sunday-school shall follow the secular school, and shall grade the Holy Scriptures. I find no hint of this in God's Word. I find in it no portions distinctively labeled, "for the child," or "for the adult." . . . The Holy Ghost, the great teacher of mind and spirit, grades. The spirit and heart of the scholar himself grades according to his need. . . . What I insist is the greatest educational blunder that could be made in our Sunday-school work is *to fail to grade the teacher*, and, instead, to spend strength and time trying to grade subject and scholar.<sup>6</sup>

Methodist leaders had tried to make the universal use of uniform lessons effective. Now we see them waking up to the fact that a system of lessons so logically prepared and mechanically admirable was failing in considerable measure to meet the per-

<sup>5</sup> *Year Book*, Eighth International Sunday School Convention, 1896, p. 156.

<sup>6</sup> *Official Report of the Tenth International Sunday-School Convention*, 1902, pp. 139-45.



sonal needs of pupils. In the councils of the lesson makers the adults in the Sunday school were well represented. Their needs were provided for. Now the needs of children and youth were beginning to get some consideration. It was this small, insistent movement among those closest to the life of childhood and youth which disturbed so deeply those who upheld the total use of uniform lessons.

The Newark (New Jersey) Association of Infant Class Sunday School Teachers was organized in 1870. The mother of a close associate of the writer in the editorial task worked with this group. Her little girl was allowed to go to the meetings. This made it possible for her, as one of our children's editors, to bring the story of these meetings vividly and warmly to those of us with whom the editor shared it. And what a story of faith and commitment to Christian nurture it was! First there were sporadic meetings of children's workers; then primary unions in several cities; then in 1884 the formation of the National Primary Union which in 1887 became the International Primary Union. The main objective was to get the International Lesson Committee to develop better outlines of lessons for children. In a conference held in 1894 between representatives of the International Primary Union and the International Lesson Committee it was agreed that in 1896 the Committee would recommend the approval of a list of Optional Primary Lessons. The skill and energy with which these children's workers proceeded is shown in the report of the International Lesson Committee to the Convention in 1896. We give here a part of the report:

After the emphatic deliverance of the preceeding convention, three years ago, in favor of "one lesson for all," we supposed the question of a separate lesson for the Primary Department was definitely settled. . . .

The prevailing sentiment of the convention was largely influenced by the previously expressed opinion of primary teachers in attendance [who expressed themselves as satisfied with uniform lessons]. . . .

At our first meeting thereafter, held in Philadelphia, in the fall of 1894, we found that the whole subject was to be reopened. A large body of primary teachers, lesson writers, and editors met us with earnest petitions for a separate course of lessons for primary classes. . . .

The committee took the facts thus laid before them into their most careful consideration.

Though our judgment was still in favor of uniformity, we determined

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to endeavor to meet their wishes. It seemed to us that if a separate primary course was to be provided, it should be constructed upon an entirely different plan from that pursued in the general [or uniform] course.

Before entering upon our work we had the benefit of numerous suggestions from persons who have made a special study of the child-mind and the way in which it may be trained. Aided by these suggestions we selected a course of optional primary lessons for one year. . . . We submit to you the question of its continuance, and suggest that you instruct the new lesson committee in regard to it.<sup>7</sup>

The primary workers had a good case and they presented it convincingly. The rather shaky approval of even an optional course for primaries by the Committee was a step forward. The *Sunday School Times* carried a course of lessons based on the optional series for primaries. These were favorably received and teachers began to ask why the graded lessons for primaries should not be made a permanent part, in fact the main part, of the courses for primaries. Those opposed to graded lessons held control of the International Lesson Committee and efforts to gain approval of the idea of developing more outlines of graded lessons were met with many obstacles; however, interest in graded materials was growing. Certain Sunday-school editors organized the Sunday School Editorial Association to co-operate with children's workers in their efforts in this direction. Out of such efforts came the organization of The Graded Lessons Conference, one of the most effective forces working to bring about the use of graded lessons.

In 1907 the chairman of the Conference, Mrs. Woodbridge Barnes, addressed a letter to the International Lesson Committee, from which we quote in part:

Our desire is to see the present beginners' course of two years suitably revised, and followed with a three years' primary course and a four years' junior course; the whole constituting nine years of graded-lesson material, to the completion of the average pupil's twelfth year. We desire to secure from the International [Sunday School] Convention . . . a vote of approval and reference of the matter to you [the committee]

<sup>7</sup> *Year Book*, Eighth International Sunday School Convention, 1896, pp. 170-71.

and . . . we desire you to consider the plan of lessons which we hope ere long to be able to submit, and issue them with your approval, with such modifications as to your wisdom may seem needful.

We are all of us strongly on the side of the International unity; we believe in our Sunday schools working together; we recognize the continued necessity for an Ungraded International Course; but we know that a proportion of schools far too large to be longer neglected demands graded material for regular lesson work. We feel that it is vital that this material should come to them from the International Lesson Committee. . . .

We as a Conference, were called together by our Chairman, Mrs. J. W. Barnes, with the approval of the International Executive Committee, on the ground that the demand for graded lessons should be led and not merely yielded to by the International Association.<sup>8</sup>

The International Lesson Committee dodged the issue and turned the request over to the Convention. Again the struggle was on, with feeling running high. We quote from a plea made by one of the supporters of graded lessons:

As has been said, the one-lesson system has its evident imperfections. It provides neither for the little ones at the lower end of the school nor for the advanced classes at the upper end. . . . The favorite comparison of the lesson to a roast of beef, the tenderer portions of which could be served up to those who still have their milk teeth, has in many instances failed, the next being too tough for any but those with jaws like a bulldog. But there are primary teachers who declare that they have taught these lessons. Oh, no, they have not. Their teaching has had as little to do with the lesson as the sermons of some ministers have to do with their texts. They have been ingenious in teaching many good things, but not the lesson. That they appear to have treated as an expert cook will treat some tough meat and bones—dump them into a kettle of water, adding salt and pepper and a number of kinds of vegetables. . . .

On the other hand, in its desire to select lessons that could be adapted to the little ones, the Lesson Committee has made the course too juvenile for the upper end of the school. . . .

Brethren, however much many of us would like to retain the one-lesson plan, we can no longer do it. Uniformity is already lost. The Beginners' Course has come to stay. An Advanced Course is demanded, and if the demand is not met by this Convention, some of us editors

<sup>8</sup> Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-9.



will be compelled to yield to the constantly increasing pressure to supply it.<sup>9</sup>

There were elements of danger in the situation which had developed. It would not have been difficult for the forces of the International Sunday School Association to split over this issue. In order to prevent such a thing from happening, W. N. Hartshorn, chairman of the Executive Committee of the Association, called an informal conference at his home in Boston on January 2, 1908. For two days fifty-four men and women discussed their concerns regarding the graded curriculum. The writer's predecessor in the office of executive Sunday School Editor of his denomination was present at this meeting. He described later the critical situation and the frankness of the discussion. Mr. Hartshorn gave a report of this conference to the 1908 International Sunday School Convention from which we quote:

The four great factors that have made possible the success of the International Lessons are: the Lesson Committee, the Executive Committee, the Lesson Editors, and the Lesson Publishers. . . .

From April, 1872, until January 2, 1908, these forces had never been brought together for close, intelligent, and frank conference. . . . It was necessary, therefore, that the individuals constituting these forces come together, look into each other's faces, and walk and talk all around the problems that confronted the Lesson Committee, the lesson editors and the publishers. . . . The conference continued for two days.

After a long and thorough discussion of every possible point of difference, a committee was appointed representing Canada, all the leading denominations, and every section of the continent. . . . [A statement] was unanimously adopted. . . . and it was voted that the Executive Committee should recommend the adoption of the same at The Twelfth International Convention at Louisville [Ky.], June 18-23, 1908.

This action provides for the continuance of the present Uniform Lessons . . . and also a complete Graded Course of Lessons is provided for such schools as may desire it. . . .

"The 'Boston Conference' . . . adopted the following findings:

"First, that the system of a general lesson for the whole school which has been in successful use for thirty-five years, is still the most practi-

<sup>9</sup> Taken from an address of the Rev. M. C. Hazard, Ph. D., and reported in the 1902 *Year Book* of the International Sunday School Association, pp. 167-68.

cable and effective system for the great majority of the Sunday-schools of North America. Because of its past accomplishments, its present usefulness, and its future possibilities, we recommend its continuance and fullest development.

"Second, that the need of a graded system of lessons is expressed by so many Sunday-schools and workers that it should be adequately met by the International Sunday-School Association, and that the Lesson Committee should be instructed by the next International Convention . . . to continue the preparation of a thoroughly graded course covering the entire range of the Sunday-school."<sup>10</sup>

As we look back upon this event we could easily rate it as being of the greatest importance. The grip of uniformity was loosened and Sunday schools now had a chance to use either International Uniform Lessons or International Graded Lessons, each bearing the stamp of the International Sunday School Association. Following the action of the Convention, the International Lesson Committee recommended that the following courses be developed:

1st. A Beginners' Course, permanent, for pupils under six years of age.

2nd. A Primary Course, permanent, for pupils between six and nine years of age.

3rd. A General Course as at present planned for pupils over nine years of age.

4th. An Advanced Course parallel with the General Courses to be prepared by each Lesson Committee [possibly of the Churches] for such classes as may desire it.<sup>11</sup>

The struggle for graded lessons for the Sunday school had won a victory. The struggle was to go on with varying successes and failures during the years ahead. A serious point of difference arose over the use of both biblical and extra-biblical materials in the Sunday-school lessons.

<sup>10</sup> *Organized Sunday-School Work in America, 1905-1908*, of the Twelfth International Sunday School Convention, pp. 101-3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 510.

## 18—BIBLICAL AND EXTRA-BIBLICAL

From the 1911 Year Book of the International Sunday School Association we learn that

during the year 1910, the Graded Lessons were the subject of a good deal of adverse criticism. The main point of attack was the presence in the series of a few lessons which, while related to Biblical texts, were chiefly concerned with characters prominent in missions, temperance and other moral and religious movements. These criticisms made it evident to the [Lesson] Committee that the Graded Lesson system was making an appeal to a larger constituency than was at first contemplated, and that many of those who desired to use the lessons objected to the introduction of any other than lessons drawn entirely from the Scriptures.

This and other considerations led the Committee [The International Lesson Committee] . . . to lay down a policy on the Graded Lessons, which is embodied in the following resolutions:

"That the American Section of the International Lesson Committee reaffirms its loyalty to the principles of making Biblical material the basis of the Lessons both in the Uniform and Graded Series.

"Further, We wish to record our belief that it is in accord with this principle to introduce Lessons of a topical nature, based on Scriptural passages, which will readily permit the discussion of the ethical and religious problems of modern life."<sup>1</sup>

It appears that the conflict over the type of graded lessons to be developed under the direction of the International Sunday School Association was far more fundamental than had been anticipated. Here was a conflict between the static and the vital view of learning which could not be compromised.

The Lesson Committee reaffirmed its determination to make the Bible the textbook of the Sunday school. It gave approval to

<sup>1</sup> *Organized Sunday School Work in America, 1908-1911* of the Thirteenth International Sunday School Convention, p. 457.



making the graded lessons Bible-centered with this slight concession—the committee voted:

That a parallel course of extra-Biblical Lessons be used with our imprimatur whenever and to the extent that there is sufficient demand for them on the part of Sunday-School workers; the regular Biblical and the parallel extra-Biblical Courses alike to pass under the careful scrutiny of the Lesson Committee as a whole before being issued, and the extra-Biblical Lessons also be related as closely as possible to the Scriptures.<sup>2</sup>

It was easy to see that there seemed to be little confidence in the future of the graded material; however, those at work on the outlines of graded courses went right ahead. They had gained a foothold and could proceed with at least faint approval by the International Lesson Committee. Here was an immense undertaking: the uniform lesson outlines could be standardized and produced with a minimum of difficulty; but it was entirely different with graded lessons. The enterprise of developing outlines of graded lessons had no precedent. They had to be developed from the very start—and on a different basis. Small wonder that the International Lesson Committee reported that the new adventure was clothed with difficulty. In its report to the Convention we find this statement:

Criticism has come in from some quarters of the issuance of a separate lesson for each year during the entire ages from four to seventeen. It is objected that all schools cannot be so minutely graded as to follow this scheme. Some of these schools where the grading is not so minute have solved the problem by using in each department one and the same lesson for all grades of the department, and thus in the three or four years cover the entire ground. . . . Another criticism is that teachers' meetings are no longer possible. That is a problem for our Teacher Training Department to solve, and one that must be solved sooner or later as the old style teachers' meeting must be thoroughly reconstructed for those who use the Graded Lessons. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Progress in a field such as this is costly. When those who stood for vital teaching materials won their point they found themselves all but overwhelmed with a gigantic task. It was fortunate

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 458-59.

that there were agencies deeply concerned over this matter which were ready to bring help. One of these was the Religious Education Association, which had been organized in 1903. This group included in its membership persons of skill and understanding in the field of curriculum construction. These leaders worked in progressive Sunday schools. They stimulated these schools to demand teaching materials which could be used in vital Christian learning. They saw to it that these demands were given consideration by a timid and sometimes balky Lesson Committee. The Religious Education Association worked with writers of closely graded lessons and helped provide opportunities for experimentation. As the graded lessons took form, educators and religious leaders working through the Religious Education Association kept the ideal of Christian nurture and the principles of vital teaching to the fore as the construction of the International Graded Lessons went forward.

We have already referred to the Sunday School Editorial Association which had been founded in 1901. After it had been in operation some ten years this organization was superseded by the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations. This, too, was an agency which came about in an effort to save the Sunday-school movement from retrogression. Editors and publishers of several denominations interested in graded lessons made up the membership. Progressive local churches were restive under the backward pressure exerted at times by the International Sunday School Association. Independent groups were issuing courses of study. It seemed to be next to impossible even to get a hearing for the concerns of the progressives before the International Lesson Committee. Out of this situation arose the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations. It was a strong force at work in the direction of progress. We shall see later how this organization helped to bring about a reorganization of the International Sunday School Association.

As we have suggested, it was a difficult and complex task to create graded lessons centered in Christian faith that took account of the complexity of the human personality. It would be interesting to state comparisons of the simple and logically rigid methods of preparing uniform lessons with what was required to bring graded lessons into being. Take, for instance, the matter of teaching objectives. The uniform lessons were built upon

the assumption that people must master the Bible, be converted, and live as Christians and church members. This was a lofty aim. It was easy to attach various materials from the Scriptures to give it support. The teacher was expected to adapt and implement the lessons taught.

Not so with graded lessons. A general aim or assumption would not be sufficient. Far-reaching results were expected to come of the vital use of these lessons. There must be an adequate and thorough plan to help learner and teacher reach toward it. Great confusion would come about if the teacher proceeded without understanding and guidance. Not only must there be an inclusive purpose for the whole graded system; there must also be objectives for each year, each unit of learning, and each lesson.

In order to provide a way to publish lessons based on the new graded lessons, a Graded Lessons Syndicate was organized, made up of editors and publishers having an interest in supplying their constituencies with these materials. We give here the statement of the general objective of these lessons developed by the Syndicate:

**GENERAL PURPOSE**—The General Purpose of these Graded Courses is:

To stimulate and guide the developing religious experience of children and young people in such a way that they shall:

(1) discover and realize for themselves the Christian way of life, and

(2) attain unto that measure of spiritual growth which belongs to each stage of normal development in Christian character and to effectiveness of Christian conduct in all the relationships of life.<sup>4</sup>

Supporting this general purpose were "Group Objectives" which we state here in condensed form:

**BEGINNERS**—To develop consciousness of the heavenly Father . . . to assist him in making habitual the Christian type of response in action and attitude . . . .

**PRIMARY**—To provide experiences through which primary children may better understand God's love and care . . . and his dependence on their help to make his love and care effective. . . .

**JUNIOR**—To help the child to become a doer of the Word, and to lead him into conscious loyalty to Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup> From *Outlines and Objectives* issued by the Graded Press.



INTERMEDIATES—To aid boys and girls to find help for practical situations in the examples and principles of the Bible . . . to develop an intelligent and devoted relation to Jesus . . . to open to them the varied contents of the Bible, and to inform and enrich their own habits of Christian living through prayer, church fellowship and service.

SENIOR—To lead young people in the Christian solution of personal and social problems, so as to fit them for efficient lives of Christian service.<sup>5</sup>

These were objectives to be followed in guiding the learner into experience of God in Christ and continual growth as a follower of Jesus.

What about objectives for teachers using these lessons? Magazines and books for teachers were in use, but they were usually limited to suggestions as to how to explain passages from the Bible, have verses memorized, keep order in the class, hold attention, and the like. In the case of the graded lessons something entirely different was demanded. Teachers needed help to see the Bible as an inspired, living message showing the unfolding presence and purpose of God, to discover the complex nature of the learner and how learning takes place, and to grasp the objectives of the graded lessons along with their implications. It would be safe to say that the efforts that went into the creation of closely graded lessons for the Sunday schools of America led to the first adequate teachers' manuals available. We might underline the term "efforts," just used. What an effort it was! Those who underwent these efforts had to face such questions as: Who can write these varied courses for pupils? Who can be secured to prepare teachers' manuals? How were the courses to be criticized? How could they be used experimentally? How were graded lessons to be published and distributed? How could workers be trained to use them? Where could sufficient funds be obtained for such a heavy investment?

Let a Sunday-school editor who was present at the historic conference in the home of Mr. Hartshorn in Boston, and who participated actively in the task of producing these lessons, report and interpret his experience:

When the first outlines of the new course were sent out for criticism, at once it became apparent that, although there was a general agree-

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

ment among denominational leaders as to the need for graded lessons, there were wide differences of opinion as to the kinds of material the courses should contain. These differences were the result of the divergent views in regard to child nature and the meaning and aim of religious education.

On the one hand there were those who, under the lingering influence of Calvinistic presuppositions, still regarded the preparation of the child for a future conversion as the central aim of religious education and believed that the way by which this was to be accomplished was that of storing the mind with Biblical information. Opposed to this group were those who held that the child is endowed with capacities which make it possible for him, under the power of divine grace made effective through wise and faithful Christian training and stimulated by wholesome influences, to grow up as a Christian, and that the whole educational program, including the selection and treatment of lesson material, should be shaped and conducted with the view of accomplishing this aim.

The difference between these groups became acute over the use in the new course of what came to be known as extra-Biblical material. The staunchly Calvinistic contended that nothing but strictly Biblical material should be used. The others held that, while the Bible is the basic source of the materials of religious education and the life and teachings of Jesus furnish the standard by which all lesson courses are to be tested, there are other materials that have not only a legitimate, but a necessary place in a complete curriculum of religious education. They maintained, for instance, that the history of the Church and the lives of great Christian leaders and missionary heroes, by showing how Christian principles have been applied in institutional life and social relations, may lead to a deeper and a more adequate understanding of the meaning of these, and help to make them more vital and impressive. They called attention to the fact that, since one cannot become an effective worker in the Church who is not thoroughly familiar with its aims and programs, a study of these should be included in the curriculum and that a curriculum that fails to leave with the pupils a vivid impression of the continuous presence and working of God in the world is fundamentally defective.

As a result of these differences of opinion, the Lesson Committee finally agreed, in cases where the prepared outlines were composed of extra-Biblical material, to offer alternative courses made up entirely of Biblical material for such denominations as preferred them.

It is perhaps needless to add that in this controversy the Sunday school leaders of Southern Methodism [also those of the M.E. Church] were allied with what they regarded as the anti-Calvinistic group, and that, when the new courses were issued, they promptly decided to adopt

those that were enriched by lessons dealing with Church history, and with the lives of such Christian leaders as Ignatius, Savonarola, Luther, Wesley, and Livingstone. They were not alone in reaching this decision. There were others among the larger denominations, as well as among the smaller, who were in thorough agreement with them; and this made possible a coöperative arrangement for the preparation and publication of the new course that not only resulted in a vast financial saving, but also made it possible to secure the benefits of wide counsel and expert criticism.<sup>6</sup>

On the surface this first struggle among those engaged in creating graded lessons was over extra-biblical materials. But, as Dr. Chappell points out, the real issue was deeper. It concerned basic theological ideas about the religious capacities and status of the child, his place in the life of the church, the meaning of salvation, and Christian growth and teaching. There is much here to remind us of the struggle through which Zinzendorf passed and which gave John Wesley such concern.

In a free country free churches can declare their convictions at the very time when they are co-operating with their brethren. This took place as work on graded lessons went forward. When the differences seemed irreconcilable they proceeded without rancor along their separate paths. In America there were denominations that held strictly to uniform lessons. Others used strictly Bible-centered graded and uniform lessons and others, graded lessons and uniform lessons.

It is encouraging to note the co-operation among those bodies which went on to develop and publish the International Graded Lessons, with which the next chapter will deal.

## 19—PLANNING AND PUBLISHING TOGETHER

The writer has studied the minutes of the syndication group which assumed the writing and publishing of the International

<sup>6</sup> Chappell, *Recent Development of Religious Education in the Methodist Episcopal Church*, op. cit., pp. 76-78.



Graded Lessons. He concluded that the following statement by E. B. Chappell, one of its leaders, concerning the early working operations of the organization gives the story in the most satisfactory way:

The Sunday School Editors and Publishers of four of our leading denominations—namely, the Congregationalists, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South—entered, at once, into a coöperative arrangement for issuing the new [graded] course, forming what has since been known as the Graded Lessons Syndicate. Later, the Presbyterians, because of the opposition of the ultra-Calvinistic group in the denomination, were forced to withdraw. The Syndicate, however, has continued in active operation.

The outlines of the first year of the Beginners', Primary, and Junior Courses, which had already been practically completed . . . were issued in the autumn of 1909, and the lessons based upon them were ready for use in the Sunday schools a year later. Other courses followed in rapid succession, and by 1915 the entire series up to and through the Young People's Department was practically completed.<sup>1</sup>

Any editor would pronounce this an amazing achievement. Those of us who worked some years later in revising and rewriting these materials could hardly see how much work could be done in so short a period. Since the Sunday School Conference mentioned in the preceding pages had backed the undertaking so fully and had even helped prepare the materials themselves, the first title given to the new curriculum was "The Conference Lessons."

We have mentioned the significant help given to the movement for graded lessons and the lessons themselves by The Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations. At one time the membership of this organization included 150 Sunday-school editors, publishers, and secretaries. The main purpose of the council is set forth in the Preamble of Article II of its Constitution, which reads as follows:

Recognizing the responsibility of each denomination, through its properly constituted Sunday-school authorities, to direct its own Sunday-school work, and believing that much Sunday-school effort is common work, therefore, for the sake of economy, educational betterment,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

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and Christian brotherhood, we organize ourselves into a body under the following Constitution. . . .

### Article II: Object

The object of this organization shall be to advance the Sunday-school interests of the cooperating denominations:

- (1) By conferring together in matters of common interest.
- (2) By giving expression to our common views and decisions.
- (3) By cooperative action on matters concerning educational, editorial, missionary, and publishing activities.<sup>2</sup>

The Editorial Section, the Education and Extension Section, and the Publication Section carried on the work of the Council. Here we see the denominations proclaiming openly that they recognize the Sunday school as an important agency of religious education; that they propose to take it seriously; that they are determined to assume (as denominations) major responsibility for the curriculum and program of this organization. The initiative in Sunday-school work is passing from nondenominational agencies to the churches. In 1913 the Council stated certain principles of curriculum construction:

1. A course of lessons should meet the immediate and future religious requirements of those taught at each stage of development.
2. A complete course of lessons should therefore be graded and progressive.
3. A course of lessons should provide for complete religious development—physical, intellectual, emotional, volitional, and social.
4. A course of lessons should be based upon the Bible.
5. A course of lessons should be coördinated in every part as closely as may be, and vitally correlated with the rest of education and of life.
6. Courses of lessons should be prepared with reference to actual conditions, and to particular types of conditions, in city and country.<sup>3</sup>

The council made it plain that it considered it the privilege of each denomination to outline and construct the course of study to be used by its Sunday schools. The International Lesson Committee had gone too far in its efforts to dominate the curriculum.

<sup>2</sup> Constitution of the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations. Taken from *Minutes of Fourth Annual Meeting of Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations*, 1914, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> From the *Minutes of the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations*, 1913, p. 46-47.

This reaction was the result. The efforts to develop graded lessons had this important side effect, which turned out to be of unusual significance to the making of curriculum. Arlo A. Brown, a leading figure in the work of religious education of the Methodist Episcopal Church at this time, gives a firsthand account of certain phases of the struggle going on at that time:

The writer is not criticizing the men and women on either side. He is simply saying that between 1908 and 1914 a "battle royal" was going on in the Sunday-school world. The battle was for principles and not for personal advantage. Had men been considering their own comfort and popularity, the outcome would have been different. They felt that they were crusaders battling for the faith, and battling for the rights of childhood. . . . The outcome in curriculum matters was the International Graded Lessons, and in organization of a new society for the promotion of Sunday-school work known as the Sunday-School Council of Evangelical Denominations, organized in 1910. . . .

After some unpleasant antagonism between the International Sunday-School Association, allied with auxiliary State and provincial associations, and the Sunday-School Council of Evangelical Denominations, allied with its denominational constituencies, the two groups began to understand each other better and to move toward a common program.\*

At last the unifying of the efforts of certain denominations to provide their own curriculum was beginning to bear fruit. Representatives of the International Lesson Committee met with representatives of the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations several times. In 1914 an agreement was reached, resulting in this affirmation:

The following general principles concerning the preparation of Lesson Courses were agreed to:

1st—Unity of Lesson Courses with denominational freedom for any desired modification.

2nd—The joint selection of all Courses on the part of the International Sunday School Association, the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations, and Denominational Agencies.

3rd—All Lesson Courses shall be available for all publishing houses.

The following action was then agreed to concerning the organization and work of the Lesson Committee:

\* Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-84.



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1st—That the International Sunday School Lesson Committee be created as follows:

(a) Eight members to be selected by the International Sunday School Association.

(b) Eight members to be selected by the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations.

(c) One member to be selected by each denomination represented in the Sunday School Council now having, or that in the future may have, a Lesson Committee.

2nd—It shall be the duty of the Lesson Committee thus elected to construct lesson courses, to be submitted to the various denominations, subject to such revision and modification as each denomination may desire to make in order to adapt the courses to its own denominational needs.<sup>5</sup>

When this statement was brought before the International Sunday School Convention, the old conflict broke out again. This time the opponents of graded lessons brought in proposals which gave promise of checkmating the movement toward developing graded materials, now making real progress. One of these suggested that ways be sought to grade the uniform materials. Of course, this suggestion was impossible. If the proposals were attempted, the result would be something farcical. However, the Committee did provide outlines for the Improved Uniform Lessons, which represented considerable progress in the preparation of these materials.

In 1918 the International Lesson Committee reported that the newly elected Committee had adopted a cycle of eight, instead of six, years for the uniform lessons and that it was preparing what was called "The Improved Uniform Series" with special adaptations for the different departments of the Sunday school. The Committee also reported that it had

entered another new field in the issuance of the first year of an adult series on "Christianity in Action." . . . And a new short course for parents [bearing the temporary title, "Hints on Child Training"] . . .

The Lesson Committee has watched with increasing interest the growing popularity of the graded lessons.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Organized Sunday School Work in America, 1911-1914* of the Fourteenth International Sunday School Convention, p. 390.

<sup>6</sup> *Organized Sunday School Work in North America, 1914-1918*, Official Report of the Fifteenth International Sunday School Association Convention, p. 299.

The formation of a new lesson committee, the recognition of the importance and popularity of graded lessons, and efforts to provide for special courses, such as those for adults and parents—these mark a turning point in the later history of the Sunday school in America. In fact, forces were in motion which were to bring about radical organizational changes in the general agencies which we have been studying. In 1922 an agreement was reached merging the International Sunday School Association and the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations. The new agency was called "The International Council of Religious Education." The organization was set up as a real educational agency related to the co-operating denominations and the various units of field work.

Those who have committed themselves to curriculum construction have some right to claim that the struggles of their predecessors for vital teaching materials for the Sunday school was a major cause of the creation of a genuine educational agency through which the denominations might work as they carried forward the program of Christian education. Methodists were in the midst of this struggle. They helped to give it fine leadership; in fact, what was going on expressed the very educational advances which they were making.

But vital teaching materials were still to face violent opposition, as we shall see.

## 20—GRADED LESSONS ATTACKED AND DEFENDED

The supporters of graded lessons for the Sunday school had won the right to have outlines of these materials issued under the name of the International Lesson Committee. The Graded Lessons Syndicate had produced the first materials of this type. But opposition to graded lessons was still strong. Much of it was found in the constituencies of the Methodist churches. Some

battles had been won, but the struggle to get vital teaching materials used in the Sunday school was to continue.

In the old files of the editors and publishers the writer found pamphlets which reflected the temper of the times. One objector addressed a gathering of ministers on the topic, "The Dangerous Germ in the Graded Lessons." He later expanded this address into a pamphlet from which we quote. The writer proposed to

dig out and articulate a few of the "missing links" of this short chain of educational evolution. . . . Perhaps the primordial germ appeared in 1881, when the Institute of Sacred Literature (at the University of Chicago) was organized. . . . Everything was colored and controlled by the principles of Scientific Criticism, so called. In 1907, this organization (The Religious Education Association) emerges as the avowed leader and manager (self-appointed) of all religious culture and progress, and singularly enough in the Sunday School Publications of the Presbyterian Board. This was the year (1907) that found some of our Sunday School helps transferred to the Cumberland Publishing House (Nashville, Tenn.) very opportunely in the locality where resided the first General Secretary of the Religious Education Association. The "Westminster Teacher" is now published there. . . . Indeed, in one of the earliest editions of the Teacher (June 8, 1907) great prominence is given to the authoritative statement of the principles and purpose of the Religious Education Association by the Secretary, Prof. Cope.<sup>1</sup>

It would have been a high privilege for the writer to have moved to Nashville early enough to have lived as a neighbor to the eminent educator referred to. Whether or not Professor Cope was officially related in any way to the publishing establishment mentioned is not known to the writer. Soon after the union of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and The Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., *The Teacher* and other periodicals of the united church were published in Nashville. In this attack we see the usual appeal to fear which characterizes the assaults upon any progressive movement. We find also the usual attack upon knowledge and scholarship and the defensive attitude toward any effort to find out what the Bible really means and how it can be used to change the character of those who use it. One "crime" mentioned by the objector was the assertion that the Sunday

<sup>1</sup> David S. McCaslin, *The Dangerous Germ in the Graded Lessons* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Bible League).



school was not merely a Bible school; another was the new point of view touching Christian nurture and growth. As was to be expected there was a violent attack upon any reinterpretation of the mission of the Hebrew prophets. This was directed against a statement carried in one of the pupil's books for youth in which it was stated:

The Prophet spoke in behalf of God. He made known the will and character of God as he read it *in his reason and conscience*. We believe that God taught him his will *as far as he was able to understand it*. So he spoke for God at some great crisis. He did not predict details in the modern sense. He read the signs of the times and foretold their results.<sup>2</sup>

The critic provided the underlining of certain phrases shown above. This attack is a fairly good example of the animus and misinformation characteristic of such assaults.

The four executive editors in the Graded Lessons Syndicate from two Methodist Churches, the Congregational Church, and The Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., prepared a reply to the various assaults being made upon the graded lessons under the title, "A Criticism of the Graded Lessons Answered." Among other things they had this to say:

We do not deem it to be germane to our purpose to take cognizance of this portion of the pamphlet [which attached the science of pedagogy and the forward movement in the Sunday school] except to say that the allegation that the Graded Lessons have been inspired by some organization or company of persons hostile to the International Sunday School Association and its representatives is without the slightest foundation in fact. We allude to the pamphlet for the purpose of reassuring those who are contemplating using the new Graded Lessons as regards their evangelical and biblical spirit and of reenforcing the opinion of those who have found them of value.

The lessons themselves are their own justification. We are confident that any who will read them with the explanations which accompany each year's work will see that they have been written and edited in entire loyalty to God's revealed truth, to the spiritual needs of the pupils of the ages for which they were intended, and in accordance with approved educational principles. The Lesson Committee which has issued the outlines of the lessons, the lesson writers who have developed

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

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the lessons for actual use, and the denominational editors who have studied every word and weighed every statement, represent men and women, without a single exception, who believe in all the cardinal and vital doctrines of Christianity, and who have done their work with a profound sense of their responsibility to God and out of a sincere love and loyalty to Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>

This strong, forthright statement gave answer to the rational charges made. So many statements were irrational and filled with suspicion that they stood outside any healthy discussion. The road ahead for better curriculum was a difficult one. It was interesting to note, as one examined the records, that the *Christian Century* asked for an imprint edition of the new courses and that a small edition was handled by this publication for a short time. Interest in the graded lessons extended to various American denominations and also to Great Britain. Electrotypes of cuts of illustrations were sold at cost to the World Sunday School Association for use in Portuguese and Spanish editions of graded lessons used in mission fields. The minutes of the syndicate show that plans were made to provide "lantern slides of selected pictures" for use with certain courses. Suggestions were made that the syndicate publish elective courses and that the group plan courses to be developed for use with college students.

In 1921 The Church School Magazine Syndicate, also known as The Church School Press, was organized as a phase of the work of the regular Graded Lessons Syndicate for the purpose of publishing a magazine. This was to take the place of *The Graded Magazine* and *The Pilgrim Magazine* then being issued by two members of the syndicate. The new periodical bore the title, *The Church School: A Magazine of Christian Education*. It was by far the most impressive of any church-school periodicals which had been published. It contained sixty pages with from eight to sixteen pages devoted to material supplied by syndicating denominations. There were indications that several churches outside the syndicate, The Interchurch World Movement, and the International Council of Religious Education would purchase copies syndicated for their use. Hopes were high to make *The Church School* a symbol of co-operation among

<sup>3</sup> From, *A Criticism of Graded Lessons Answered*, published by the Methodist Book Concern, Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sunday School Work, Pilgrim Press and Publishing House, M. E. Church, South.

churches and general agencies. However, such hopes were disappointed. The venture was costly and this impressive periodical had to be discontinued.

During the early years of the 1920's the new International Council of Religious Education was overwhelmed with the task of its organization. A new and far-flung program was being projected. This prevented the new Council from proceeding to set up adequate machinery to provide new or revised outlines of International Closely Graded Lessons. These had been in use ten years and were getting out of date. (They had been issued in undated form.) After calling, without response, upon the Council at this point, the Syndicate turned to the task of revising the graded lessons. It was at this time that the writer became a member of the syndicate. He was impressed by the size of the task of revision and rewriting and by the seriousness of purpose of these curriculum-makers. There were changes taking place in the churches. Life all about was moving at a rapid pace. As we planned for the new or revised courses to be kept in use in the same format for possibly a decade, it became evident that mere revisions were out of the question. We must not only bring the material up to date; it must even be projected into the future insofar as we might be able to predict it. In a later chapter more will be said about the weekday church-school movement and the effect it produced upon our efforts to develop new graded materials.

One of the more influential leaders in the field of religious education at this time was George Albert Coe. Due largely to unfortunate experience with the rigid and static lesson materials of the past, Dr. Coe came to the conclusion that the Sunday school had failed to prove its claim to be a school in the real sense of the term. He had reached the conclusion that in order to aid the progress of real Christian teaching in home and church the Sunday school might well be given up.

The possibility that this institution of precious memories may soon be no more is "viewed with alarm" by some; but others "hail the coming dawn" when a mass of exasperating inefficiencies shall no longer have an organ for transmitting themselves from generation to generation. . . . Would it not be well to inquire just what the issue or problem is, and what steps we might take *together* in the search for a satisfactory solution? . . .



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The Sunday school as we know it came into being, for the most part, not as anybody's invention but as a spontaneous product of its times. Robert Raikes did not devise it; Jacobs and Vincent in their turn did no more than trim the sails of a ship that was already upon the high seas; and the wind that compelled us to make a reform tack at the beginning of this century blew "where it listed."<sup>4</sup>

After several incisive paragraphs in which Dr. Coe foretells the radical changes soon to take place in the Sunday school, leading to its actual eradication as an agency of the type in which it has existed, he concludes:

Why not squarely make Sunday observance a sphere for experimentation in Christian living and so a part of the program of the Sunday school? I cannot describe the kind of school that would result for experimentation only can give form to an aspiration like this. But I can simply imagine whole half days and even whole days spent together by teachers and pupils. Worship there will be, but as of old it will be in open places as well as within consecrated walls. Study groups there will be, but they will be anywhere in the community or in wide nature, not merely in chairs in a stated room. Hands will be employed, not to make symbols of ideas, but to make things for use and enjoyment. . . .

If we are wise we shall not spend much energy either attacking or defending the Sunday school. In the nature of things it will lose its present name, and its present characteristic activities will drop away. If we are wise, we shall see to it that in losing its present narrow life it emerges into a larger life, and on the first day of the week.<sup>5</sup>

At several points Dr. Coe's prophecy came true. We have made the Sunday church-school a vital part of the total teaching program of the church. We have breathed life into the organization and brought it close to the needs of its constituency. However, there are no signs that this respected agency has been "junked."

<sup>4</sup> From an article entitled, "Shall We Scrap the Sunday School?" by G. A. Coe, *Church School Journal*, February, 1926.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

## 21—STRUGGLING FOR IMPROVED CURRICULUM

When suggestions were made to abolish the Sunday school, it seemed that the old agency was taken more deeply than ever into the hearts of its supporters. These suggestions, as we have pointed out, led to efforts to discover widening work for the Sunday school to perform and also to discover its relation to other religious agencies with teaching functions. There was particular interest in developments going on in the area of weekday religious education. Some weekday workers felt that it would be best if weekday schools had little or nothing to do with the regular Sunday school sessions. Such an arrangement, so they thought, would lessen the effectiveness of their work. Many of these workers were not vitally interested in the teaching work of the individual denominations and preferred to work independently. It seemed that the old struggle between independent agencies and the churches working in the field of religious education might be renewed. Many church leaders felt that the Sunday school should be the main teaching agency, extending its teaching operation into the weekdays.

This situation was bound to affect the plans of the Graded Lessons Syndicate, which was busy at the time in its work of revising and rewriting the graded lessons. It was agreed to begin by enlarging the teachers' manual for the courses for intermediates during three quarters so as to provide guidance for expanded Sunday sessions of the church schools or for other possible uses of the material. The increase in the number of vacation church schools called for some adaptation in the materials prepared for the summer quarter. The problem was made more difficult because in some sections the church schools ceased to operate through part of the summer, while in other sections they operated in full force.

As we have indicated, there were no revised outlines of graded lessons prepared by the International Council of Religious Edu-

cation to follow, so the various denominations operating through the syndicate had to make outlines and unit descriptions themselves. The new material was issued under the title of "The Church School Closely Graded Courses." It was somewhat advanced in character and made use of many teaching suggestions which had come to light since the first graded materials were published. By 1927 the various portions of the series began to appear. The courses had a fine reception, and a number of denominations not in the syndicate put them into use. After they had been in circulation as long as two years, fresh suggestions were prepared for teachers and appeared in the teachers' publications of several denominations. This proved to be an effective way of keeping the materials continuously useful and up to date.

The perennial problem was to keep the curriculum in line with the changing situations in the teaching program of the denominations. Such changes were taking place in the youth department of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Efforts were under way to help youth and their teachers develop a unified curriculum in which the various operations of the church school (Sunday morning session, evening meeting, weekday and vacation activities, and other such programs) could be related and the work carried on as a single operation. This militated against the use of permanent texts for intermediates and seniors that were being provided by the syndicate. In the course of time the graded courses for seniors went out of use. Later still in this denomination the idea of a unified youth curriculum and program had to be modified, but it depended increasingly on the use of dated materials which were pliable to the emerging program needs.

The Graded Lessons Syndicate had other important matters to face. There was the emerging need for better materials for parents of, and workers with, very young children. The trend was toward bringing these very young children to the Sunday morning sessions of the church school. The International Group Graded Lessons were getting into use at this time. This led the syndicate to realize that, now that the smaller schools could obtain graded materials, it would be wise to specialize in meeting the curriculum needs of the larger church schools.

The curriculum currents were flowing rapidly and in some turbulence. Certain prominent persons were predicting that it would be only a few years before all teaching materials in the Sunday



school would be provided in the form of films, film strips, records, and the like. One of the last major enterprises undertaken by the syndicate was the issuance of large workbooks for use by intermediates. At the time of Methodist unification there were three denominational members of the Graded Lessons Syndicate—The Congregational Christian Churches, the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Unification brought about the end of the old formal organization, though much work was done as the Congregational Christian Churches and the Methodists continued to co-operate. One of the writer's most inspiring and rewarding experiences was to serve both as an editor and writer in the work of the Graded Lessons Syndicate.

But let us bring our story back into the developments taking place in the merging bodies that made up the International Council of Religious Education. In 1920 the International Lesson Committee appointed a Committee of Seven, of which Dr. Luther A. Weigle was chairman, to make a thorough study of the lesson situation. Within two years this committee brought to the new council four recommendations:

1. That the Closely Graded Lessons in their present form be not revised, but that the existing outlines be turned over to the denominations to do with as they might desire.

2. That the Improved Uniform Lessons be discontinued and that the outlines thenceforth be issued as straight Uniform Lessons without adaptations.

3. That a new series of Group Graded Lessons be prepared, biblical in content, dated, and running through three-year cycles for the several age-groups.

4. That an entirely new curriculum be created, to be known as the International Curriculum of Religious Education, to provide an integrated curriculum for Sunday and weekday hours, and to be based upon the latest developments of educational theory and practice.<sup>1</sup>

In this report we have another pivotal point in the story of curriculum construction. At the time it was made, there were the straight uniform lessons and the improved Uniform Lessons.

<sup>1</sup>W. C. Bower and P. R. Hayward, *Protestantism Faces Its Educational Task Together* (Appleton, Wisc.: C. C. Nelson Publishing Co., 1949), pp. 69-70. Used by permission of the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.

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This was a confusing situation since the "Improved" lessons were intended to make the need for graded lessons unfounded. Then there were the International Graded Lessons, based on old outlines and growing out of date. The Committee of Seven proposed the development of Group Graded Lessons, that is, lessons graded, not by years, but by department groups in the church school. Real graded lessons were to be made available to schools of all sizes in this way and the old graded lessons could be revised to meet the needs of the larger schools while the Group Graded Lessons would meet the needs of smaller schools. The Committee of Seven proposed the abolition of Improved Uniform Lessons to further clarify the situation. It was an intelligent and far-sighted report which looked ahead to the time when a different concept of curriculum would become prevalent in local churches.

One of the outstanding tasks accomplished in this connection was a tabulation of all materials in use in the larger denominational groups of the nation. In charge of this survey was Dr. Ira E. Price, who had been secretary of the International Lesson Committee. We quote a few words from the foreword to the report. Dr. Price states:

All the materials used in church schools, whether, Sunday, Week-day or Vacation, that had been forwarded by their publishers have been assembled in the laboratory of the Joint Committee. This includes practically all church school materials in existence. . . .

The tabulation includes twenty-one series, there being two hundred and sixty-nine courses in all. In the arrangement of the tabulation . . . in every instance the first column has to do with *Content*, the second column with *Use* and the third column with *Life Situations*.<sup>a</sup>

The content of the materials studied included much use of scripture—biblical introduction, bibliographies, historical events, poetry, prophecy, legal codes, wisdom books, epistles, and parables, and also lessons in appreciation on manners and customs, and geography. Some of the material was descriptive, ethical, devotional, and dramatic. From the Old Testament there were courses dealing with beginnings, patriarchs, the exodus from Egypt, judges, kings and kingdoms, exile and post-exilic accounts, and prophecy. From the New Testament there were courses dealing with Jesus Christ, Peter, Paul, the apostolic age,

<sup>a</sup> *Tabulation of Church School Curricula*, 1923.

and prophecy. Extra-biblical materials dealt with missions, general history, church history, nature, history of religions, Christian doctrine, temperance, social relations, art, poetry, music, and folklore.

Two basic purposes were discovered: to give information and to assist the pupil to control his experience. Various methods of teaching were suggested—telling, with little or no pupil activity; telling, with some pupil activity; telling, in fairly equal amount with pupil activity; telling, with maximum pupil activity; activity, with no telling. The materials took various forms—story, conversation, quest, questions, lecture, discussion, memorization, solving problems, investigation, handwork, dramatization, enterprises, play, and reading.

Life-situations included in the materials were home life, individual experience, contacts with the community, and church life. Included in these learning situations were play, worship, growth of ideals, nurture of faith, relations with and work for others, choice of vocations, association with the Christian fellowship, worship, contacts with the house of worship, self-control, use of money, courtship, respect for law, recreation, education, race relations, and citizenship.

We cannot but be astonished at the way in which an extremely simple and rigid set of Sunday-school lessons had proliferated into the forms here tabulated. Certainly the International Council had an opportunity in examining these materials to give leadership in curriculum construction.

In the last *Year Book* of the Sunday School Association the writer found a statement by W. C. Bower entitled, "Progress in Lesson Making—a Report on the Commission on Policy" (also known as Committee of Seven) which describes so clearly what was going on in this area that he is quoting a considerable part of it:

The volume of testimony from the constituency of the Lesson Committee . . . was unmistakable and emphatic in the expression of certain fundamental needs that have arisen out of actual experience in the administration of religious education. . . . The experience of the publishers showed a marked and steady increase in the use of the Graded Lessons, and an increasing satisfaction in their use by both large and small schools. There was expressed in this correspondence a widespread demand for a series of lessons graded by age-groups rather than by years.



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Needs were pointed out that are not being met by any of the present materials in any adequate way. Among these were mentioned the need of more material designed to stimulate a personal decision for Christ and for church membership; more specific training in the meaning and function of church membership; the inclusion of more material that will stimulate and guide toward a religious choice of a life-work; the inclusion of material designed for training in worship; the incorporation into the course of study of memorization material; and the inclusion of a wider range of missionary instruction. There was a surprising unanimity in the demand for a pupil—rather than a material-centered course of study. Strangely enough, there was an almost universal demand for a more comprehensive and working knowledge of the Bible than has been afforded by the Uniform or the Improved Uniform system. . . .

As a result of its study, the Commission of Seven recommended to the Lesson Committee three policies, all of which were adopted. . . . The first of these was that there be formulated a Group-Graded series of lessons for each of the five age-groups. . . . These lessons are to be predominantly biblical, consecutive and cumulative, dated, are to move in three-year cycles, and are designed to impart a comprehensive knowledge of the Bible.

The second policy provides that, beginning with 1924, while Uniform Lessons shall continue to be issued, the Group-Graded Lessons shall be substituted for Uniform Primary and Junior Lessons, that the Uniform Lessons shall be adapted only above the Junior Department, and that above the Junior Department the Group-Graded Lessons and the Improved Uniform Lessons be recognized as alternate courses, the whole to constitute a "Group-Uniform Series."

The third recommendation is that the Lesson Committee begin at once the formulation of an entirely new course of study that will comprehend both Sunday and week-day religious education that will be correlated with the course of study in the public school, and that will embody the most fundamental principles of modern curriculum building. This new and comprehensive course is to be known as "The International Curriculum of Religious Education." In the meantime the graded lessons are to remain as they are without revision.\*

Some who have followed the course of the International Council of Religious Education have reached the conclusion that, insofar as vital educational leadership related to the curriculum of the Sunday school is concerned, this report represents one of

\* *Organized Sunday School Work in North America, 1918-1922*. Official Report of the Sixteenth International Sunday School Convention, pp. 212-15.

the highest points reached in its history. The council took a courageous stand in favor of supplying the curriculum needs of children and youth in the church school. It took a stand against intrenched efforts to hold back the progress of curriculum construction. Those who provided the prophetic leadership in this time of testing deserve the highest praise.

At its meeting on April 20-21, 1922, the Lesson Committee launched the International Group Graded Lessons, beginning with courses for primaries and juniors, with a list of lessons for each group for the year 1924. Simultaneously with the issuance of these group lessons for the primary and junior departments of the Sunday school the committee omitted adaptations of Improved Uniform Lessons for use with primaries and juniors. The purpose was to substitute these new courses for the former adaptations of Improved Uniform Lessons for these departments.

We must not avoid recognizing the limitations of these outlines. Workers with children in the Sunday school were better trained than those with other age groups. It seemed wise to start the use of group graded lessons with these groups. They were breaking new ground for the principle of grading. Some trouble was sure to come. In spite of such a handicap the group lessons for primaries and juniors were successful. As the years passed, outlines were issued and lessons developed for beginners, intermediates, and seniors. Here were graded lessons built from the beginning for use in smaller Sunday schools. It was no longer needful to offer schemes to make closely graded courses usable in schools for which they were not intended, to manipulate departmental lessons so that they might be used both in closely and group graded situations. For the first time the mass of American Sunday schools had within reach a curriculum built on the principles of Christian nurture—built around a central purpose. Now it was possible for pupils attending school regularly and continuously to realize as they moved from course to course that they were making progress in learning and to feel the sense of an increasing drive to learn. The fact that International Group Graded Lessons were dated removed the difficulty which comes when undated materials are used year after year. The lesson outlines were revised regularly in the light of comments from users. Editors and lesson writers were either making

revisions or creating new units of lessons as the revised outlines reached them.

Outlines of International Group Graded Lessons for Intermediates and Seniors were prepared for publication in 1927. During the same year the director of Research and Service of the International Council of Religious Education held a curriculum construction conference which lasted for three weeks and was participated in by twenty-seven workers representing fourteen denominations, the Missionary Education Movement, and the International Council. Progress was made in defining the objectives of religious education. Efforts were begun to collect accounts of the experiences of growing persons. Dependable knowledge of activities, interests, life-situations, and needs of persons for whom curriculum was being prepared had to be in hand before much could be done to create authentic teaching materials. The results of this conference were formulated and released in what was called *The Blue Book*. This material was in mimeographed form, but it met a pressing need, especially for lesson writers and editors. Paul H. Vieth, who served as chairman of the group, set forth in usable form the things which had come to light during the conference. We quote a few statements from the chapter on "The Use of Subject Matter" in Dr. Vieth's volume, *Teaching for Christian Living*:

Hold in mind the idea that the curriculum consists of the experience of the pupil under guidance. Subject-matter, then, is the means which the pupil utilizes, under the guidance of the leader, to bring about an enrichment of his experience, and to bring it under his control so that he may realize his Christian objectives. . . .

In the final analysis it is the teacher who must guarantee, on the one hand that the course will be life-centered, and on the other hand that it will provide ample and rich subject matter to stimulate religious growth.

To make this task of the teacher easier many curriculum units are being developed along the line of "method-guides." It is assumed that the teacher must take final responsibility for developing the course so as to meet the needs of his group, and the effort is made to help him in every possible way in doing this. . . . Source materials are offered for the use of both teacher and pupil, but not as so many pages to be covered, but in direct relation to definite life needs.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Paul H. Vieth, *Teaching for Christian Living* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1929), pp. 128-29, 132-33.



This point of view represents the most extreme reaction to the older concept of content-centered materials to be "learned" with the aid of reward and discipline. It was to be expected that there would come a counterreaction in the direction of a moderate concept of vital curriculum.

Methodists were at one in this conference, just as they were in all the agencies which we have been discussing. In a sense, what these bodies accomplished co-operatively could well be incorporated into our Methodist story.

## 22—PRINCIPLES, POLICIES, AND FORMS OF CURRICULUM

In 1927 the International Lesson Committee and the Committee on Education were merged to form the Educational Commission of the International Council of Religious Education. The purpose of the Commission was stated thus:

There shall be an Educational Commission which shall represent the International Council of Religious Education in investigation, research, formulation of educational policies and programs, the construction of lesson courses and curricula for the various age groups, and in leadership training, and which shall make recommendations thereon to the International Council.<sup>1</sup>

Through the setting up of this structure the program activities and the lesson-making activities were brought closer together. The report of the General Secretary to the Council in 1929 indicated a trend which grew in strength for a time. The Secretary said:

The trend toward larger cooperation in the Council is also illustrated by the gradual change of policy with respect to the development of

<sup>1</sup> The International Council of Religious Education, *Reports, Minutes, and Year Book*, 1928, p. 109.

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curriculum. This important work was first undertaken by the Subcommittee on International Curriculum of the Lesson Committee. . . . Curriculum development has now become the function of the several committees of the Educational Commission and of the different executive departments of the Council.<sup>2</sup>

Behind this trend lay the theory that program and curriculum materials are to be considered indistinguishable. Printed materials of any kind whatsoever were to be looked upon as of contingent value, such as is determined by the interest of the pupil, the plan of the teacher, and whatever the present teaching situation appears to call for. Formulated material of any kind, including the Bible, could have no intrinsic value. One of several perils implicit in such a theory was the probability that any curriculum issued on this basis would lead the more serious churchmen to look to independent publishers for their Sunday-school literature.

Since 1925 the writer had been closely associated with the curriculum-making activities of the council, first, as a member of the Committee on Improved Uniform Lessons, then as chairman of the Committee on Group Graded Lessons, a member of the Educational Commission, and a member of the Committee on Basic Philosophy and Policies. At times it appeared that he was giving as much of his time to the International Council as to his task as Editor of Church School Publications of his denomination. He was too close to changes taking place in the field of curriculum to visualize them in their full proportions. He was only one of many Methodists just as deeply involved in this great co-operational enterprise as he. In fact we were expressing the attitude of Methodism in such co-operation. We were also seeking help in developing our own enlarging teaching program and materials.

In the early 1930's the council had developed the *Curriculum Guide*, which covered the entire field of Christian education. Only the first book of the *Guide* was printed under the title of *Christian Education Today*. At once the Committee on Group Graded Lessons made the *Guide* the basis of its work. This instrument also affected strongly the work of the Committee on the Improved

<sup>2</sup> The International Council of Religious Education, *Year Book*, 1929, Reports, Minutes, and Directory, p. 24.

Uniform Lessons. In the group lesson committee we were developing units for primaries, juniors, intermediates, and seniors. Units for other age groups were added later. Our committee showed its dependence upon the *Curriculum Guide* in the introduction to the printed cycle for 1936-38:

1. *Growth in Christian personality.*

In the *Curriculum Guide* the principles which govern the growth of personality are set forth. It is stated that education is a process of growth, that growth comes about through experience, that experience takes place in responding to situations and that Christian education must, therefore, concern itself with the experience of growing persons.

2. *The Bible as subject matter in the curriculum.*

The Bible is given an important and determinative place in these outlines. It is a constant source of reference and study. It is used both for its own sake as a body of knowledge and for its place in the guidance and control of the experience of the pupil. The Committee has sought to provide for its use in accord with the principle that "subject matter which has grown out of the experiences of life in the past fulfils its function when it re-enters the life process and serves to guide a new generation to an ever higher mode of life."

3. *The Experience of the pupil.*

An important place is given in the *Curriculum Guide* to the experience of the pupil. These cycles have taken account of that important principle. A constant check has been made against the list of areas of human experience so as to make sure that the religious needs of pupils in all their life relationships are being met.<sup>3</sup>

The International Council had been entrusted with the sponsorship of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible which had just been begun. Naturally all of us became deeply interested in this momentous undertaking. The council was able to make available to the various committees the services of some of the outstanding biblical authorities in the nation. As a result, we were able to work far more accurately than before.

The *Curriculum Guide* exerted an influence far beyond the council. For one thing it made an attempt to describe the relation of religion to education as carried on by the churches. We quote

<sup>3</sup> *Outlines of Curriculum Material*, October, 1935, September, 1936, pp. 1-2. (General Board of Christian Education, M. E. Church, South).



a few paragraphs from *Christian Education Today* (Book One of the *Guide*):

It is not the business of the International Council of Religious Education to formulate a creed that would seek to express the common faith of the churches of which it is the cooperative agency. These churches differ greatly in their attitude toward creeds, from those which profess the full range of the historic symbols of the Christian tradition to those that acknowledge no creed save the Word of God as recorded in the Scriptures. It is, however, the right and duty of the International Council of Religious Education to declare its Christian faith. . . .

In recent years Christian education has been under fire from both of two extreme positions—from secular-minded humanism on the one hand and from arbitrary supernaturalism on the other.

To the left are the non-theistic humanists, who undertake to cultivate religious education without God. For them, religion is simply another name for devotion to human ideals, and belief in God is regarded as an irrelevance and a distraction from the real business of living.

Over against this humanistic extreme has emerged a tendency to drive too far in the opposite direction, and in effect to deny religious education in the name of God. This is the tendency of those who so exalt the arbitrariness of God's sovereignty, the infinity of his being, his absolute otherness, as to deny that either in man or in nature can any way to the knowledge of God be found. It is the tendency, again of those who over-emphasize the non-rational or super-rational elements in religious experience, the utterly mysterious, the numinous. It is the tendency of those who overstress the role of religion in poetry, mythology, and paradox.

Christian education will not yield to these extremes. It is animated by Christian faith. And Christian faith responds to the whole truth of which these are but partial expressions. As an ethic of love, Christian faith shares in the social idealism of the humanist. As the gospel of the Kingdom of God, it proceeds from the divine initiative, the act of God who in Christ seeks to reconcile the world to himself. In Christianity, reason and revelation, knowledge and faith, are not sundered or opposed, but organically related. . . .

Christian education may be described in twofold fashion. It is education fully aware of the Christian heritage, animated by Christian faith, and based upon Christian principles of living. Or again, it is the Christian society seeking to secure stability and progress, to serve God and help man, by the method of education. . . .

Christian education should result in changed and changing life. In the light of the evangelical interpretation of the Christian tradition as well as of our growing knowledge of the nature of man and of God's

method of working, this change is not confined to one transforming experience, but is an on-going process throughout life, frequently beginning in the simple experiences of young children. This change involves definite commitment of oneself to God and a believing sense of acceptance by him. Yet no such experience may be viewed as final. However sudden its initial stages may be in the case of some persons, the achievement of a Christlike life is a process which involves the progressive orientation of the whole self toward God and man, deepening insights, growing competence in judging life's experiences, and increasing ability to carry ideas and convictions into effective action. Only as Christian education eventuates in a Christlike life, no matter how successful it may have been in communicating knowledge or in building up technical skills, can it be judged to have fulfilled its function.<sup>4</sup>

To have co-operating denominations agree upon a statement such as this was almost unbelievable. The statement, *Christian Education Today*, made a profound impression upon Christian education in America. We had made significant progress in our thinking in the field of curriculum for the church school. We were proving also that the spirit of ecumenicity was at work.

It has been difficult to eliminate from this story many interesting and important matters handled by the Committee on the Group Graded Lessons. However, there are other things which we must consider.

In 1939 the Council set up a special Committee on Lesson Policy and Production. To this group were referred certain problems which had to do with failure of certain denominational and independent publishers to go along with the progressive positions which had been taken. They were publishing uniform lessons for small children, even though the council had declined to issue outlines for these age groups. Other denominations were publishing revised graded courses based on their own outlines. This was due to the fact that the new council had not been preparing such material. As Dr. Bower and Dr. Hayward tell us:

Accordingly, the Committee on Lesson Policy and Production . . . was appointed to make a study of the lesson situation. . . . The Committee found that the circulation of various types of materials among the denominations showed sixty per cent Uniform Lessons, twenty-two per cent Departmental or Group Graded Lessons, and eighteen per cent

<sup>4</sup>*Christian Education Today*, copyright, 1940, by the International Council of Religious Education, pp. 11-16.

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Closely Graded Lessons. The Uniform Lessons [built on independently developed outlines] were being used by six denominations for beginners, by twenty-two for primaries. . . . More denominations were using society topics prepared outside the Council than those using topics prepared by the Council.<sup>5</sup>

Out of the work of the Committee on Policy and Production came a proposal to rearrange all teaching materials sponsored by the Council so that they would fit into three groups. The Committee on International Bible Uniform Lessons would work to develop a system of uniform lessons for the Sunday school which would be biblical in content and principle, "but providing for a graded approach through supplemental materials and adaptations within the several age groups." The Committee on the Graded Series would be responsible for closely graded lessons, group (or cycle) graded lessons, young people's society topics, weekday courses, vacation courses, camp units. The Committee on the Curriculum Guide would work to produce a guide to be followed by local churches in creating or selecting materials for their curriculum. The title given to the whole system was "International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching."

When the report of the Committee on Policies and Production was presented, much of it gained the support of the progressive denominations; but it compromised the policy which had been held by the council. Uniform lessons for beginners, primaries, and juniors were to have council approval, and these age groups were to be supplied when desired with uniform outlines issued by the council. To the Methodists this was a serious matter. We had not supplied such outlines for our children for nearly twenty years. Now our competitors, with the backing of the International Council, would offer uniform lessons to our children. Most of the workers with children stood against such a move. Several groups of workers from other denominations stood with us. Since various pressures—which need not be discussed in this connection—developed to sweep the council away from its position of educational leadership, we were defeated, though our minority vote was fairly large.

It was a bitter disappointment to see the basic position of the council compromised for reasons which appeared to us to be

<sup>5</sup> Bower and Hayward, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-79.



secondary. The report was adopted and the children in our Sunday schools were left without the support of the International Council. Those who planned to deprive them of graded lessons could point to the backing of the council in the way this vote went. The Methodists were on the verge of consummating their union. The first impulse was to remove ourselves from the International Council and work alone in our efforts to "hold the line" in favor of graded lessons for the church schools of America. The action which had been taken was, as we understood it, completely out of line with all the idealistic commitments of the council. To many it appeared that the pressure of practical considerations could be expected to take precedence over the idealistic when stress developed. Nothing could have done more to cement the educational forces of the Methodist bodies soon to unite than this gallant stand for the educational principles which we held dear. We continued to give help, as we found it possible, in carrying forward the work of the newly organized system of council curriculum, but we found it hard all the while to carry our bitter disappointment.

In 1932 the International Council was showing serious interest in radio as an aid in religious education. A special Committee on Radio began experimental broadcasts over Station WMAQ, Chicago, for children. Within ten years the Radio School of Religion was in operation with teaching helps for classroom use. As Drs. Bower and Hayward go on to tell us:

Even more intimately connected with curriculum development in its broader sense has been the work of the Department of Visual Education. . . . In 1939 plans for securing the production and distribution of films in cooperation with the Publishers' Section [of the Council] were started. . . . The Committee [on Visual Education] issued a bulletin on *Visual Method in the Church Curriculum*, with descriptions of various types of equipment and costs and an annotated list of 100 films. . . . Visual aids were correlated with church school and leadership curricula and worship programs.\*

The writer was called upon to participate in two audio-visual workshops in which projected materials were evaluated. In the process of developing new audio-visual materials, production-guides were developed in somewhat the same way as outlines of

\* *Ibid.*, p. 86.

units of curriculum. This made it possible to pass judgment upon them as forms of curriculum. The Committee on the Graded Series and the Committee on the Uniform Series had representatives on a joint committee at work on audio-visuals to see what use could be made of this medium in teaching. The publishers working with the International Council were provided with production guides in case they might wish to create films or film strips.

At some points The Methodist Church was far ahead of the work of the council in this area, though we co-operated fully with that agency. Through the Committee on Curriculum hundreds of audio-visuals were evaluated for possible use with lessons and programs. A considerable number of production outlines were also created each year. The use of this medium has expanded to such an extent that each quarterly forecast of available curriculum materials within reach of Methodist Sunday schools will contain a list of several hundred items of this type.

Leadership education was given immediate consideration as the International Council got under way. In the records we find that:

The church has been concerned about those who were teaching the Christian religion. . . . It is but natural, therefore, that as the International Council began to function it, too, should be concerned with the matter of leadership education. This was not a new concern, however; the denominations and the International Sunday School Association had been active in the promotion of various plans so that when the Council was formed there was already a large deposit of work and interest on which to build.<sup>7</sup>

At first there were small manuals used by the denominations. There were more ambitious texts for use in community training schools. There were also texts for use in more advanced schools of principles and methods. The Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations had developed more thorough texts for use in schools of training standardized through agreement among the denominations. These were called Standard Training Course Texts. There was also an "Advanced Training Course" which was used in colleges and in community training schools.

When the International Council got its training program under

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

way, the Leadership Training Publishing Association was organized. The writer, who was a member of this body, has in his possession bound copies of the minutes of several of its meetings. The constitution called for the L.T.P.A. to be made up of

representatives of such evangelical denominations as may desire to cooperate in the purposes of the Association, and the Director of Leadership Education of the International Council, *ex officio*.<sup>8</sup>

The constitution goes on to say that:

Its object shall be to prepare and publish through the denominational houses, materials needed in the conduct of the Leadership Training program of the cooperating denominations. . . . There shall be three standing committees which shall carry out the policies and instructions of the Association. These committees shall be (a) Executive, (b) Publishers, (c) Editorial and Educational.<sup>9</sup>

The writer can testify to the difficulties experienced by those who served in the Leadership Training Publishing Association. Often sales did not cover the cost of printing and production. One of the main difficulties centered in what was called "the shredding process" to which manuscripts were subjected as they were passed upon by many appointed readers. Often a really good manuscript would be "denatured" seriously. This led writers to decline invitations; it also led to the production of ordinary texts.

After years of faithful, and often effective, service the L.T.P.A. was succeeded by "The Committee of Nine." The work of this committee was to continue the development of training texts and make a thorough survey of the situation. Out of this study came the organization of the Cooperative Publication Association. The Association was well integrated with the International Council, with publishers and editors of co-operating denominations having direction. Again, as a member of this group the writer has a testimony to give. He never underwent more exacting labor than this Association demanded of him. Largely through the brilliant strategy and deeply committed efforts of a high official in our Publishing House, the Cooperative Publi-

<sup>8</sup> Constitution, Leadership Training Publishing Association. Approved February 11, 1933.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*



cation Association has done a remarkable job in producing week-day texts, vacation texts, leadership texts, camp manuals, and electives of various types. Thus was solved one of the most discouraging of our problems.

In this brief chapter we have given a condensed account of happenings in religious education in America which deserve treatment in many volumes. We have referred to how the co-operating churches of America discovered underlying principles of Christian teaching and to the way policies and forms of curriculum emerged. Having moved from being a participant to being a more leisurely evaluator, the writer sees now that at the time of his participation he realized very little of the importance of what was going on.

## 23—CHRISTIAN FAITH BASIC TO CURRICULUM

We have just mentioned the efforts made to discover underlying principles on which the curriculum for Christian teaching could be built. Still, those closest to the task were not satisfied with what had been accomplished. In the fourth decade of the current century the International Council of Religious Education began to take fuller account of the racing changes going on throughout the world. These changes affected our nation, the American churches, and even the council itself. For this reason it seemed wise to sponsor an evaluation of the enterprise of Christian education, to be made by concerned persons outside the immediate staff activities of the council. Those who undertook this task well knew of its difficulty and danger. At the point of theological concepts treasured by Protestant churches in America, the situation was especially delicate. Nevertheless the study was undertaken. Eight study committees were set up to deal with: Christian Education, Yesterday and Today; Theological and Educational Foundations; The Local Church Program; The

Curriculum of Christian Education; The Family; Leadership; The Community Approach to Christian Education; The Structure and Functions of Agencies of Christian Education. In relation to these categories the Committee to Study Christian Education gave consideration to:

a. Conditions precipitated by the war, taking account of the necessary adjustments in the program of Christian education to meet the needs of the new situation and of men and women returned from military and defense services.

b. The need of a considered statement as to the place of theological and other concepts in Christian education.

c. The educational opportunity and responsibility presented by the forthcoming publication of the new Revised Version of the English Bible.

d. The place of the educational program and of the educational method in the total program of the church, the home and the community.

e. The urgent need of new ways of serving the unreached part of the constituency.

f. The need of plans for securing a more adequate lay and professional leadership.

g. The incorporation of the ecumenical Christian ideal in the program of Christian education and the conscious participation of the International Council in the world-wide movement in Christian education.

h. A definition of the functions of the inter-church agency of Christian education [the International Council] and of its committees and other groups.

i. The basic issues involved in accepted organizations and patterns of work.<sup>1</sup>

To have even a small part in such a study was an experience which the writer will continue to cherish. Here was a task which challenged the best thinking, the deepest concern, and the utmost skill that might be brought to bear upon it. Those who participated worked almost without thought of the limits of time and strength. A sense of mission seemed to have seized them. Those who prepared the report of the "Study" included this statement in the introduction:

<sup>1</sup> The International Council of Religious Education *Year Book*, 1944, p. 108.

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Education in America in its beginning was basically Christian in motive and content. With the passing of the years two tendencies have developed in public education. One is the extension of education to include more and more people and to embrace more and more completely the areas of human interest and living, rather than limiting itself to fundamental processes of human communication such as reading and writing. The other is to exclude religion from its curriculum, on the ground that it cannot properly be dealt with in a common school which includes all the children of Jews, Catholics, and Protestants with their many divisions, as well as the children of unbelievers.

The first of these tendencies has made it impossible for the church to be zealous in the extension of Christian education. The second has laid upon the churches the obligation to provide Christian education for the children of Christian parents, and at least some form of religious education for all. It is widely assumed that education without religion is not fair either to religion or the children, or the future of the state itself. It is accepted by almost all churches that Christian education is basic to their purpose and work.<sup>2</sup>

The main problem was to deal correctly with the religious bases underlying all valid Christian curriculum. In general the approach was to try to grasp the meaning of the Christian gospel as evangelical churches might see it together and to locate the meaning of Christian education as it relates to what had been agreed upon.

Christian education is the process by which persons are confronted and controlled by the Christian gospel. It involves the efforts of the Christian community to guide both young and adult persons toward an ever richer possession of the Christian heritage and a fuller participation in the life and work of the Christian fellowship. . . .

The foundations of Christian education are to be found in the nature and condition of man who is to be educated in the faith which the church professes, and in the principles of education which define how learning takes place. . . .

An enormous amount of study has been devoted to the understanding of man in the various aspects of his development. Physical, mental, social, and religious aspects of development have all been subject to scrutiny. These studies have usually been conducted without religious assumptions or from a frankly naturalistic point of view. Yet, in so

<sup>2</sup> *The Church and Christian Education*, ed. Paul H. Vieth (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1947). Published for Cooperative Publication Association, pp. 20.



far as they help to understand man and his development, these findings are of inestimable value to Christian education.

On the other hand, Christian education has been largely based on definite affirmations about human nature which were originally expressed in prescientific terminology. This does not necessarily make them outmoded. Wide areas of agreement are found between the secular and the religious student. Both express the potentialities of man; both admit great limitations. Where there appears to be disagreement, the Christian educator is faced with the question of how far traditional assumptions must be modified, and the investigator must consider whether he has left out any relevant evidence.<sup>3</sup>

After treating the concept of man as a child of God with immeasurable potentialities of good and as a creature who alone does not achieve the greatness and goodness of which he is capable and easily comes to be alienated from God and even in rebellion against his Creator, the report points out that man is in need of salvation.

When he experiences this salvation, he knows that it is not of himself, but joyously receives it at the gracious gift of God. . . . One of the greatest needs of religious educators today is to restore the proper balance between these two truths. We should never give up the conviction that we are dealing with the children of God who are growing up within the body of Christ. Man can be sinful only because he is a child of God. On the other hand, the empirical investigations which lay bare man's brutality and pride, his sensuality and neurotic characteristics, lend strong confirmation to what the theologians are trying to express through the doctrine of original sin. A sound program of Christian education must take into consideration this dual nature of man.<sup>4</sup>

The agreements reached concerning the theological foundations on which our program and curriculum of Christian teaching should rest came out of long and often baffling discussion. They represented as good a consensus as we had a right to expect. At least, they cleared up long-existing misunderstanding and helped to bring together those leaders who had been antagonistic in their understanding of what Christian education was expected to accomplish. Naturally the writer's principal interest was in the work of the Committee on the Curriculum of Christian Education of which he was a member. This group tried to con-

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52-54.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

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serve the religious value to be found in the old ways of developing teaching materials and to maintain the specifically religious character of the curriculum of Christian education, while at the same time it utilized the stream of life experience both within and without the Christian fellowship. We quote a pivotal statement which our group was able to formulate:

The purpose of the curriculum of Christian education is to confront individuals with the eternal gospel, and to nurture within them a life of faith, hope and love in keeping with the gospel. The organizing principle of the curriculum from the viewpoint of the Christian gospel is to be found in the changing needs and experiences of the individual as these include his relation to (1) God, as revealed in Jesus Christ; (2) his fellow men and human society; (3) his place in the work of the world; (4) the Christian fellowship, the church; (5) the continuous process of history viewed as a carrier of the divine purpose and revealer of the moral law; (6) the universe in all its wonder and complexity.<sup>5</sup>

A definition of curriculum, so briefly stated, had to be explained, and the committee attempted to give this explanation:

That this viewpoint turns the spotlight of attention on the individual learning person, for it recognizes that results can be measured only in terms of *his* growth in Christian faith and life. It is *his* experience that must be at the base of his understanding, acceptance, and living of the Christian faith, and *his* problems as a changing individual in a changing world must be met. It thus conserves the insights which have come from the study of persons and how they learn, which have been associated with "experience-centered" education. These insights are sound and meaningful in the process of Christian education.

But it does not view the curriculum as centered in "raw" experience—experience for its own sake, neutral in quality, going nowhere in particular. Rather it pictures the curriculum as taking shape around experience which stands in definitely Christian relations and moves in a definitely Christian direction. . . . It puts at the center of the curriculum, not the individual, per se, but the individual viewed as a Christian disciple. . . . It sees at the center of the curriculum an individual learner, not in splendid isolation, but in vital relation to the great realities of the Christian faith and life—God, Jesus, fellow men, the Bible, the church,

<sup>5</sup> From Section IV of *The Study of Christian Education*, "The Curriculum of Christian Education," p. 15. Copyright, International Council of Religious Education.

the world. The term "person-centered" is thus given a turn which does not thrust these great realities out toward the periphery of the curriculum but brings them in close to the person whose education is our great concern. . . .

In [such a conception of the curriculum, the Bible and other parts of the Christian heritage are regarded as the record of God's self-revelation to mankind] and of man's response to this revelation. They are utilized as sources for the understanding of God's great redemptive purpose, resources in meeting present-day problems, a critique of present practices, and an enrichment of current experience.

In practical terms, this statement suggests that the curriculum would not be organized solely on the level of current experience nor on the level solely of content. Some parts of the curriculum would be organized around ongoing life experiences, with much use of helpful content. Other parts would explore step by step some body of content, with constant relevancy to ongoing life experience. In any series of related units one of these would be the organizing principle and the other contributory, in order to insure continuity and integration. . . .<sup>6</sup>

Naturally we have limited our reporting of the work of the Committee to Study Christian Education to those portions of the report related to the basis and development of curriculum. Even in these areas of the report we have discussed only a few of the findings. This was the summit reached by the International Council in the understanding and statement of its work. One is led to look back to the time when Robert Raikes gathered a few ragamuffins off the street to teach them reading, writing, and simple figuring under the sponsorship of religion. He is also led to recall the journey over the rocky road of progress of teaching materials in America; the times when learning was brought about by the use of content motivated by reward and punishment; the achievement of bringing uniformity in lesson-making out of the Babel Period; the sterile period when the uniform principle was in vogue in American Sunday-school teaching; the long and costly struggle for graded lessons; the attainment of clearer ideas of what it means to learn and use materials in teaching. Some of the most important developments in this amazing progress took place in the first three decades of our century. And now this crowning effort to ponder the meaning of what Christian education means and what it involves. The

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-17.



Methodists were deeply involved in these interdenominational efforts. We helped in winning victories; we went down to defeat, all the while revealing Methodism's concern for the child and its commitment to the cause of vital Christian learning.

Only a few years remained before the International Council of Religious Education would cease to exist as a separate organization. It was to unite with the other general co-operative church agencies of America to form The National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. In the new body the work of the International Council is carried on by The Commission on General Christian Education in the Division of Christian Education. The writer had just been made vice-chairman of this commission when the time of his retirement from editorial activity arrived. Since that time he has found continued satisfaction in observing the further progress of curriculum development. As he has already indicated, the real proportions of these developments are now much more apparent to him.

The co-operation of Methodists with the work of various co-operative agencies forms a significant part of the story. However, there is much more to tell concerning developments within our own church.

## 24—FURTHER PROGRESS IN METHODIST CURRICULUM

Having followed the story of how Methodists have worked through interdenominational agencies dealing with the curriculum of religious education, let us take up the threads of our own account of progress in this area. We learn from an examination of the minutes of the Book Committee of the Methodist Episcopal Church that in 1902 the publication of the *Berean Lesson Card* and the *Bible Study Home Quarterly* had begun; the *Bible Student's Magazine and Sunday School Journal* was in circulation. The name of the *Bible Study Home Department Quarterly* was

changed to the *Home Department Quarterly*. When the Book Committee met in 1903 other periodicals reported were: *Berean Lesson Pictures*, *Primary and Little Beginners' Quarterly*, *Boys' and Girls' Lesson Quarterly*, *Primary and Beginner's Teacher* and *Junior Worker's Quarterly*. These seem to be new periodicals or existing periodicals with new titles.

At this time the Secretary of Sunday School Publications of the Methodist Episcopal Sunday School Union took a firm stand in favor of providing graded lessons for children. The 1904 report of this officer to the General Conference stated that the periodicals of the church

contain graded studies, so that, though the same passage of Scripture is used in several grades, each grade has its own separate lesson adapted to the age of the pupil.

Years before outlines of regular graded lessons had been prepared by the International Lesson Committee, the Methodists were working out adapted materials aimed in the direction of grading. When the Lesson Committee maintained an attitude of reluctance to develop such materials, its members were warned that this denomination would go forward with plans to develop graded lessons of its own.

The 1904 General Conference set up a board which took the name, "Board of Education, Freedman's Aid and Sunday Schools." The Sunday School Union which had been responsible for the work of the Sunday schools and in part for the materials in use was absorbed into the new board. It proved to be so unwieldy that this new board was discontinued in 1908. The Board of Sunday Schools was formed with a corresponding secretary as administrative head and an Editor of Sunday School Publications. Later, in 1916, the Editor of Sunday School Publications became, ex officio, the chairman of the Curriculum Committee of the Board of Sunday Schools. There was also an editor of the *Epworth Herald* elected by the General Conference.

It was when the Board of Sunday Schools was set up that we find the first clear references to the policy of following educational ideals and methods in the Sunday school. At one of the first meetings of the new board the editor had this to say:

The regnant thought with me in connection with all Sunday school

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work, has been genuineness. . . . Sunday school work in many cases we might as well frankly acknowledge is essentially a sham. The Bible has not been studied candidly and honestly out of sincere regard for truth; much of the teaching has been an imposition and a cheat; the methods employed in many schools have been in utter ignorance of what should be the main purpose of the Sunday school; noise and babble and inanity and conceit have constituted in large measure the program which should have been devoted to reverent and patient study and worship and instruction and religious training. The cheap and flashy and meretricious and sensational have been exploited—cheap literature, cheap teaching, cheap thinking, cheap music, cheap evangelism, cheap everything, in too many instances have made the Sunday school contemptible in the eyes of intelligent and sincere people. . . . The devil which we have to fight chiefly is the devil of sham, and it is amazing in how many forms he has embodied himself.<sup>1</sup>

This was a breath-taking declaration charged with brave resolve to make the teaching function of the church worthy of the highest respect. In 1907 definite plans were announced by the editor to publish graded courses, even though they had not been approved by the International Lesson Committee. In a short time graded lessons were issued under the title: "The Berean Graded Sunday School Lessons—International Courses."

As was to be expected, under new leadership striking progress was made in the Sunday school publications. For the record we are giving in part the list of these by age groups and departments issued in December, 1916:

### FOR CHILDREN UNDER SIX YEARS OF AGE

#### *Uniform Lesson Periodicals*

"Berean Lesson Pictures." . . . Issued quarterly for weekly distribution. Lesson story . . . on the back of each card.

"The Berean Leaf Cluster." A wall roll . . . giving a picture. . . . Issued quarterly.

#### *Graded Lessons*

"Beginners' Stories." Issued quarterly.

### FOR CHILDREN IN THE PRIMARY DEPARTMENT

#### *Uniform Lesson Periodicals*

"The Berean Primary Quarterly." . . .

<sup>1</sup> From the *Year Book*, 1908, the Board of Sunday Schools and Department of Sunday School Publications of the Methodist Episcopal Church, p. 111.



## FURTHER PROGRESS IN METHODIST CURRICULUM

### *Graded Lessons*

"Primary Stories, First Year." Issued quarterly. . . .

"Primary Stories with Handwork, Second Year." Issued quarterly. . . .

### *Story Paper*

"Primary Story Paper." Issued monthly. . . .

## FOR CHILDREN IN THE JUNIOR DEPARTMENT

### *Uniform Lesson Periodicals*

"The Boys' and Girls' Lesson Quarterly." . . .

"The Shorter Junior Lesson Quarterly." A condensed edition of "Boys' and Girls' Lesson Quarterly."

### *Graded Lessons*

"The Pupil's Book for Work and Study." Issued quarterly. . . .

### *Story Paper*

"The Sunday School Advocate." Issued weekly. . . .

## FOR INTERMEDIATE PUPILS

### *Uniform Lesson Periodicals*

"The Illustrated Intermediate Quarterly." . . .

"The Berean Intermediate Lesson Quarterly." . . . A condensed edition of the "Illustrated Intermediate Lesson Quarterly," without illustrations. . . .

"The Lesson Leaf." Issued quarterly, one leaf for each lesson. . . .

### *Graded Lessons*

"Pupil's Text Book." Issued quarterly. . . .

### *Story Paper*

"The Classmate." Issued weekly. . . .

## FOR SENIOR PUPILS

### *Uniform Lessons*

"The Senior Berean Lesson Quarterly." . . .

"The Lesson Handbook." For Seniors and Adults. Vestpocket size [commentary on lessons for entire year]. . . .

### *Graded Lessons*

"Student's Text Book." Issued quarterly. . . .

### *College Voluntary Series*

[A special course of voluntary Bible study for classes consisting of college students. Prepared in co-operation with other denominations by a joint committee of the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations and the Council of the North American Student Movement.]

"Student Standards of Action." . . .

"Christian Standards in Life." . . .

"A Life at its Best." . . .

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- "A Challenge to Life Service." . . .
- "The Social Principles of Jesus." . . .
- "Christianizing Community Life." . . .

## FOR ADULTS

### *Periodicals*

"The Adult Bible Class Monthly." [Containing uniform lessons; also occasional elective courses.]

"The Adult Worker's Manual." [Containing a fuller exposition of special courses in the Adult Bible Class Monthly.]

"The Home Department Quarterly." . . .

"The Home Department Visitor." A special edition of the "Home Department Quarterly" with . . . special guidance for Home Department officers and visitors.

### *Special Courses*

[Some of these were printed in separate volumes.]

"Poverty and Wealth." . . .

"The Liquor Problem." . . .

"International Peace." . . .

"Development of the Kingdom of God in Old Testament Times." . . .

"Development of the Kingdom of God—Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ." . . .

Development of the Kingdom of God Since the Time of Christ." . . .

## FOR TEACHERS

### USING INTERNATIONAL UNIFORM LESSONS

"The Sunday School Journal." [Issued Monthly] . . .

"The Adult Worker's Manual." . . .

"The Berean Primary Teacher." [Offers special help for teachers in the Primary Department. Issued quarterly.]

## FOR TEACHERS

### USING INTERNATIONAL GRADED LESSONS

#### *Periodicals*

"The Graded Sunday School Magazine" is an organ of the graded Sunday school movement and an index of its progress. . . . Issued monthly.

"General Manual on the Introduction and Use of the Graded Lessons." [Undated.] . . .

#### *Beginners'*

"Beginners' Teacher's Text Book." Issued Quarterly. . . .

#### *Primary*

"Planbook Series—Book I, Book II." For Primary Superintendents.

"Primary Teacher's Text Book." Issued quarterly.

## FURTHER PROGRESS IN METHODIST CURRICULUM

### *Junior*

"Junior Manual on the Introduction and Use of Graded Lessons."

"Junior Teacher's Text Book." Issued quarterly.

### *Intermediate*

"Intermediate Teacher's Manual." Issued quarterly.

### *Senior*

"Senior Teacher's Manual." Issued quarterly.

### FOR TEACHERS OF SPECIAL COURSES

"The Adult Worker's Manual."

Teacher Training Courses—four texts.

"The Worker and His Work Series"—eight volumes.<sup>a</sup>

Besides the periodicals and texts listed above, the *Leaf Cluster* and *Berean Picture Cards*, as well as the pictures which were sold with graded lessons, had a wide circulation.

The materials which we have listed form an impressive collection of curriculum materials. Those who produced them deserve high praise. These materials were brought into being during a period of ferment when the struggle for vital teaching materials was at its height. In this connection we report an interesting story. It seems that the New York House, where graded lessons were produced, sent out rather challenging booklets setting forth the highly superior values of these lessons. The Cincinnati House, on the other hand, where uniform lessons were handled, circulated equally enthusiastic promotion replying to the statements of its rival. The Book Committee had to reconcile the two groups. The fight for graded lessons had been so bitter that when they got into use they seemed to carry a sacred element in them. It was said that they were the best material for the large school, the average school, the small school—any sort of school. No matter what the circumstance, this was the superior curriculum. This made for some difficulty when group graded lessons were introduced.

Note that there is still some use of the term "Berean," introduced years before by Dr. Vincent. At this time it seemed to be more a kind of trade name than a descriptive title of lesson materials. The use of uniform lessons with primaries was recognized as extremely difficult. To deal with the problem the *Berean Primary Teacher* was issued. The difficulty was not so great in

<sup>a</sup>*Year Book* of the Board of Sunday Schools of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 1916.



the case of juniors and was taken care of with more adequate pupil's materials. The *Sunday School Advocate* was still being used as a story paper for juniors. The junior pupils had available two quarterlies and the *Lesson Leaf* for use in class.

The creation of the *College Voluntary Series* was a noteworthy achievement. It showed that there is a natural connection between curriculum materials used in the church school in the local church and the voluntary religious studies of students in institutions of higher learning. When the young person goes from church to college and finds that his needs are kept in mind, it can help to prevent the break that often occurs when this transition is made. Since unification, we have made several attempts to emulate our predecessors at this point, but without striking success. The need for special courses for adults desiring to carry their studies beyond the use of the uniform lessons was met by carrying such courses in *The Adult Bible Class Monthly* or *The Adult Worker's Manual*. Some courses appeared in undated form. One is impressed with the quality of the curriculum which appeared in the closely graded lessons. They represented at the time the best curriculum so far prepared for general use in church schools.

The advent of the graded lessons made it necessary to provide a periodical which would interpret the whole idea of grading and provide helps for officers and teachers in church schools using graded materials. This was done by launching *The Graded Sunday School Magazine*. This periodical was issued jointly by the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It was difficult to maintain the new publication. The Southern church withdrew its sponsorship and began to publish *The Sunday School Standard*. In 1919 *The Pilgrim Magazine* of the Congregational Church, *The Sunday School Standard* and the *Graded Sunday School Magazine* were merged to form *The Church School*, published by the Graded Lessons Syndicate. The story of this periodical has already been related. The two larger Methodist bodies co-operated to publish some excellent leadership education texts.

When the Board of Sunday Schools of the Methodist Episcopal Church was set up in 1912 the legislation describing the relation of the editor to the board was not clear. In discussing the matter the editor stated that he had been allowed to carry too much responsibility alone.

It is clear that in his relations to the Board the Editor's rights and privileges are greater than his amenability. It is rather an anomalous thing that a man should be *ex officio* a member of a Board and one of its coördinate executive officers while at the same time not responsible in the slightest degree to the Board for the discharge of his official duties.<sup>3</sup>

The editor pointed out that the responsibility for creating curriculum for the church must be shared by the proper board. The difficulty was corrected as the Curriculum Committee began to assume more authority in creating the curriculum.

During these years the Board of Sunday Schools was having difficulty with the International Lesson Committee. The Committee on Lesson Courses of the Methodist Board came to the opinion that as soon as possible

The Methodist Church should assume full responsibility for the preparation of its lesson courses.

It was further suggested that this work be done in co-operation with the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations and the Federal Council of Churches. The first of these two agencies had been at work for some time drafting principles on which curriculum should be built and carrying on experimental schools in which tentative materials were tested.

We could point to many other evidences of the creative attitude of leaders in this field. In 1915 *The Adult Bible Class Monthly*, in popular use in the church schools, also became an organ of the Methodist Federation of Social Service and the Methodist Brotherhood (a board made up of laymen). Though group graded lessons had not been developed by the International Lesson Committee, the Methodist Board of Sunday Schools was preparing the way for substituting such lessons in its children's classes. The needs of parents of cradle-roll children were taken account of in the setting up of an inter-Methodist committee to deal with it.

We have seen how leaders in the Methodist Episcopal Church provided much of the drive needed to provide better curriculum for the church school. Noteworthy advances were made at many points. But there is more to tell about the progress in curriculum-making which Methodists were achieving.

<sup>3</sup> *Year Book*, 1912, the Board of Sunday Schools of the Methodist Episcopal Church, pp. 70-71.

## 25—MORE ACHIEVEMENTS IN CURRICULUM CONSTRUCTION

For the record we shall include in this chapter a significant part of the story of *Child and Church*.

In 1916 the Editor of Sunday School Publications of the Methodist Episcopal Church proposed to the General Conference:

1. That the Editor be elected by the General Conference.
2. He should prepare and edit all books and periodicals included in the Sunday-school curriculum and all other required Sunday-school publications.
3. He should be amenable to the Book Committee and his salary should be paid by this Committee.
4. He should be an executive official of the Board of Sunday Schools.
5. He should have charge of all matters relating to the curriculum and courses of study for the Sunday school, and for teacher training and all Sunday-school literature, requisites, and supplies for use in Sunday schools.
6. He should be amenable to the Board of Sunday Schools in matters relating to curriculum.

This proposal was a further effort to clarify the status and function of the Editor of Sunday School Literature. In this way he would be related in his work both to the publishing group and to the field forces of the Sunday school. In 1921 *Missionary Education*, a monthly, was launched, as were also *Target* and *Portal*. These were story papers for intermediates which took the place of *The Sunday School Advocate*. In his report to the Board of Sunday Schools, the editor announced the decision to call the new International Group Graded Lessons, "International Group Lessons," in order to leave the field open to the closely graded lessons for use in all schools that desired the best graded



materials. The group lessons were to be used to drive out the use of uniform lessons for children and youth.

The General Conference of 1924 ordered the merger of the Board of Sunday Schools with the Board of (higher) Education, the Board of Education for Negroes, and the Board of Epworth Leagues. The name of the new body was called the Board of Education. Immediately the integration of literature used in Epworth Leagues and Sunday schools began. Meanwhile the Abingdon Religious Education Texts were coming into use. These were texts prepared for use in weekday schools and in advanced classes in church schools. *First Steps in Christian Nurture* was begun as an inter-Methodist periodical for use by parents of and workers with young children. *The Elementary Magazine*, a monthly for teachers of children, and *Studies for Youth* (issued in 1927), a quarterly carrying Senior Group Graded Lessons, came into use.

The *Discipline* of 1924 provided for a Committee on Religious Education in each local church school to help the pastor in selecting curriculum. The Conference also approved the proposal that an Interboard Curriculum Commission be set up to be composed of:

(1) One Bishop, (2) three representatives of the Board of Sunday-Schools (3) three representatives of the Board of Epworth Leagues, (4) one representative of the Board of Home Missions, (5) one representative of the Board of Foreign Missions, and (6) one representative of the Woman's Missionary Society.

This commission became later the Committee on Curriculum.

In both the larger bodies of American Methodism the development of a united curriculum of Christian education in the area of youth work proved difficult. An examination of the background of the problem will help us to understand it. In 1881 young persons in several denominations organized themselves into a semi-independent organization which came to be called the Society of Christian Endeavor. Some chapters of Christian Endeavor were organized in Methodist churches. At the same time groups of youth in Methodist churches were being organized in sporadic fashion. The Church Lyceum had been organized in Philadelphia in 1872. In the vicinity of Chicago many young people became interested in the doctrine of entire sanctification

and organized the Young People's Methodist Alliance in 1883. Other spontaneous organizations of this kind which sprang up about this time were the Young People's Christian League, The Methodist Young People's Union, and the North Ohio Conference Methodist Episcopal Alliance. In the effort to meet more adequately the religious needs of these young people, Dr. Vincent organized in 1884 the Oxford League which he sought to make similar to the "Holy Club" to which Wesley belonged at Oxford University. Under his leadership it was possible to bring the various organizations together. In May, 1889, The Epworth League of the Methodist Episcopal Church was formed.<sup>1</sup>

The official journal of the organization was called *The Epworth Herald*. This youth journal succeeded remarkably well and under able leadership was without a rival in its field. When the new Board of Education was set up, the editor of Sunday-school publications and the editor of *The Epworth Herald* were authorized to unify as far as possible the curriculum materials for which they were responsible. Some Epworth League units were placed in the periodicals for the Sunday (or church) school. But in the course of time the trend developed to undertake an ambitious program of publishing "units of experience" for youth. Even though sales were disappointing, a great many items were issued. At the time of unification some three hundred separate published "units," very few of them used to any large extent, were stacked on the shelves of the Chicago headquarters. The fact that some of the leaders of the Epworth League seemed to desire to carry on the work largely outside the Board of Education seemed to have stimulated the production of such a large number of independent curriculum units. This problem remained to face those responsible for the organization of the Board of Education of the united church in 1940. The account of the Epworth League in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, is given later on in our story. The Methodist Protestant Church seems to have depended solely upon the Society of Christian Endeavor to meet the needs of its young people.

In the opening years of the current century the Sunday School Editor of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had only slight hope of providing more than International Uniform Lessons for

<sup>1</sup> Information secured in part from *Young People's Movement in The Methodist Church*, (unpublished) by Walter N. Vernon, Jr.

his constituency. He reconciled himself to the situation by securing specialists in children's work to prepare adaptations of uniform materials for the children. He realized that these lessons were adult in character, but this was all he could do for the time being. Lessons for primaries were issued in *Our Little People*, a set of folders; for juniors in *Junior Lessons*, a quarterly; for early and middle adolescents in *Intermediate Quarterly*; for older young people and adults in *Senior Quarterly*. Helps for teachers and officers were carried in *The Sunday School Magazine*. *Olivet Picture Cards* were popular with the children, though they were not supposed to take the place of *Our Little People*. Sometimes they were given as a reward for regular attendance. The *Home Department Quarterly* served the older persons in the home department of the Sunday school. It carried expanded daily Bible readings and uniform lessons. In 1910 *The Children's Visitor* became *The Visitor*, a story paper for Sunday-school pupils of differing ages. *Boys and Girls* became the story paper for children. *The Adult Student* was now in circulation as a monthly carrying uniform lessons. Graded lessons published by the Graded Lessons Syndicate came slowly into use.

Up to 1894 the *Discipline* of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had provided for a Sunday School Committee which would look after the Sunday-school interests of the church. This was superseded by a "Board of Five" with much the same functions. When the new Epworth League Board was set up, it was directed as follows:

¶ 254. It shall arrange a course of reading, and in connection with the Publishing Agents shall provide for the publication of the same.<sup>2</sup>

The legislation did not contemplate that this board would make any effort to provide curriculum materials.

In 1906 the General Conference gave the following directions concerning the editor:

¶ 245. *Ans.* 8. The General Conference shall elect an Editor of Sunday-school Literature, who shall have editorial supervision of all the publications belonging to the Sunday-school department [of the Publishing House].<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> 1906 *Discipline*, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.



The editor was to serve also as chairman of the General Sunday School Board. At last the work of the Sunday school was to have the supervision of a general board of the church with the editor as chairman. It was further provided that:

¶ 246. *Ans.* 9. The General Conference shall elect a Board of five, of which the Sunday-school Editor shall be the chairman; who, with the Publishing Agents and the Book Committee, shall provide for the publication of Sunday-school books and periodicals, and have general supervision of the Sunday-school interests of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

The situation still stood in need of clarification though it had been improved by this action. The first time the term "curriculum" appears is found in the *Discipline* of 1914:

¶ 249. It shall be the duty of the [Sunday School] Board . . . to determine the Standard of Efficiency of Sunday schools and the Sunday school curriculum, including courses for parents, . . . officers and teachers . . . Wesley [Adult] Bible Classes.

¶ 251. . . . The Sunday School Editor [also called the Editor of Sunday School Literature] . . . shall prepare and edit all books and literature included in the Sunday school curriculum and all other required Sunday school publications.<sup>5</sup>

A Joint Committee [between the Board of (higher) Education and the General Sunday School Board] was set up "to provide for the work of specific religious instruction in the educational institutions of the Church."<sup>6</sup>

In the minutes of the meetings of the Book Committee held during this period we find the editor reporting the publication of International Graded Lessons for Beginners, Primaries, Juniors, Intermediates, and Seniors; and International Uniform Lessons in the pupil's periodicals with helps in the *Sunday School Magazine* and *Primary Teacher*. Naturally the work went forward in spite of some opposition. In 1911 certain parties sent a lawyer to inform the Publishing Agents that suit was being brought against them based on an article which had appeared in *The Visitor*. The story dealt with the difficult experiences of children living in slums in close proximity to a cotton mill. The suit

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>5</sup> 1914 *Discipline*, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, pp. 96-97.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

was dropped, but its meaning is easily seen. During the editorship of this writer he received a warning from a friend who reported threats against the literature for youth because a certain story seemed to express some interest in a community soon to be affected by the building of a T.V.A. dam. Later he learned that the warning originated in the office of a power company. Such criticism is not unusual and only reveals the effectiveness of some of the Christian teachings being set forth in the periodicals.

In 1914 a special edition of the *Sunday School Magazine* carrying help for teachers of International Graded Lessons was published. After three years this edition was dropped, and the editor co-operated with the Methodist Episcopal Church in publishing *The Graded Magazine* designed to serve the same purpose. This was soon succeeded by *Church School*, whose story we have given.

In 1917 the Inter-Methodist Committee on Teacher Training had been set up. A new plan of age grouping and nomenclature had also been adopted. When the home department was discontinued, the name of *The Home Department Quarterly* was changed to *The Home Quarterly*. The Sunday School Board set up a Committee on Curriculum whose duties were to

consider all matters relating to the formation and development of the curricula for use in the schools and for Teacher Training.<sup>7</sup>

*The Worker's Council*, launched a short time before this, did not prove successful and was given up to be succeeded by *The Methodist Superintendent and His Helpers*. In 1925 *The Worker's Council* was revived. In 1920 *The Methodist Leaf*, for use in classes studying uniform lessons, began publication. A short-lived publication was *The School Standard* which ran for a few months; then it appeared as *Church School* (standard edition). Later *Church School* was merged into the syndicate publication of this name. In 1918 *The Primary Teacher* was succeeded by *The Elementary Teacher*, which carried helps for all teachers and officers at work with children.

The General Conference of 1922 reorganized the General Sunday School Board and set up two executive secretaries. The Con-

<sup>7</sup> *Year Book*, 1918, The Board of Sunday Schools of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

ference elected an Editor of Sunday School Publications and a General Secretary of the Sunday School Board. It described the duties of the Board as:

5. To determine the Sunday school curriculum, including special courses for parents, pastors, Sunday school officers and teachers and Wesley classes, and courses for week-day religious instruction correlated with the Sunday school.

6. To consider and pass upon recommendations made by the Sunday School Editor in regard to literature for the various departments of the Sunday school work.<sup>8</sup>

The new board was directed to work through three age-group departments—Elementary, Intermediate-Senior, and Young People and Adult. The General Conference also outlined the work of the Sunday School Editor:

¶ 367. The Sunday School Editor, and such Assistant Editors as he may designate, the General Secretary, the officer in charge of leadership training, department superintendents, and such other persons as the Board may elect shall constitute a Committee on Curriculum, whose duty it shall be to recommend to the Board all courses provided for in ¶ 365 [the Sunday school curriculum].<sup>9</sup>

As it turned out, the Committee on Curriculum came in time to be made up largely of members of the two staffs of the Board. Every effort was made, however, to get continuous advice and counsel from local churches.

The entire series of International Graded Lessons was now in use. However, all the periodicals for pupils and teachers carried uniform lessons. *The Visitor*, the story paper for youth, was succeeded by three papers: *Haversack*, for intermediate boys; *Torchbearer*, for intermediate girls; and *Our Young People*, for older youth. Certain undated electives for adults were also in use: "Studies in Methodist History," "The Church and Its Sacraments," "What Every Methodist Should Know," and "Essentials of Methodism." In 1923 the Board approved the preparation of "The Town and Country Training Course" (later known as the Cokesbury Training Course). It made use of texts within reach

<sup>8</sup> 1922 *Discipline*, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, p. 163. Copyright, 1922, by Lamar & Barton.

<sup>9</sup> 1922 *Discipline*, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, p. 165.



of smaller and less privileged training classes which we published.

It was with some trepidation that we (the writer having become a member of the editorial staff) released the new International Group Graded Lessons in the periodicals for children. These took the place of uniform lessons, and we expected some difficulty. However, a fine job was carried on in preparing teachers and other workers with children for the change, and the difficulties experienced were far less than we had feared. In 1928 Group Graded Lessons for intermediates, and in 1932 Group Graded Lessons for seniors, were in circulation. These eliminated the providing of uniform lessons for these groups. Uniform lessons were carried in *The Advanced Quarterly* and *Senior Quarterly*, *Adult Student*, and *Home Quarterly*. In 1932 group lessons for intermediates were carried in *Intermediate Quarterly* and group lessons for seniors in *Epworth Highroad*.

The 1930 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, set up The General Board of Christian Education which represented a consolidation of the Epworth League Board, the Board of (higher) Education, and the General Sunday School Board. In the new organization the work of the Sunday school and that of the Epworth League were combined in the Department of the Local Church; work in the area of higher education came under the direction of the Department of Schools and Colleges; and the creation of periodicals and construction of curriculum under the direction of the Editorial Department. The *Discipline* provided that

¶ 412. through the Editorial Department, in coöperation with the Committee on Curriculum and Program . . . the Board shall provide all curriculum materials necessary for carrying on its work. . . . The Secretary of the Editorial Department shall be responsible for providing the curriculum materials, including books and periodicals, of the Board. After consultation with the General Secretary he shall make recommendations to the Book Committee in regard to the requirements of the Department. . . . The Book Committee shall have full financial responsibilities for such publications [as the Committee on Curriculum and Program and the Editor shall recommend]. . . .

¶ 413. In order to the effective discharge of the joint responsibilities of the Board and the Book Committee . . . there shall be a Joint Committee on Publication. . . . composed of the General Secretary, the Secretary of the Editorial Department, and the Publishing Agents. . . .

¶ 414. It shall be the duty of the Joint Committee on Publication to consider and make recommendations to the Board and to the Book Committee in regard to:

(1) The publication of educational periodicals, graded and elective courses, training texts for Church school officers and teachers, and other books recommended by the Committee on Curriculum and Program that the work of the Board may require.

(2) Plans for the improvement and circulation of all the literature of the General Board.

(3) All other matters of common interest to the Board and to the Book Committee.<sup>10</sup>

When the work of the General Board of Christian Education got well under way, we were issuing the following periodicals:

*Our Little People*, a set of folders containing International Group Graded Lessons for primaries.

*Junior Lessons*, a quarterly containing International Group Graded Lessons for juniors.

*Olivet Picture Cards*, containing abbreviated lessons for primaries similar to that issued in *Our Little People*.

*Intermediate Quarterly*, containing International Group Graded Lessons for intermediates.

*Senior Quarterly*, containing uniform lessons for older youth and adults in smaller schools.

*Adult Student*, a monthly containing uniform lessons and magazine features for adult readers.

*The Methodist Lesson Leaf*, issued quarterly, containing uniform lessons.

*Epworth Era*, a monthly; the organ of Epworth League groups in process of becoming a working part of the church school.

*The Elementary Teacher*, a monthly for officers and teachers at work with nursery children beginners, primaries, and juniors.

*The Sunday School Magazine*, a monthly for officers and teachers at work with intermediates, seniors, young people, and adults.

*The Worker's Council*, a monthly for Sunday-school superintendents and other officials.

*Childhood Guidance in Christian Living*, a quarterly for parents and teachers of young children.

<sup>10</sup> 1934 *Discipline*, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, pp. 192-93. Copyright, 1934, by Whitmore & Smith.

## CURRICULUM CONSTRUCTION FAR FROM COMPLETE

*Home Quarterly*, for use by older home members of the Sunday school.

*Boys and Girls*, a weekly story paper for children under eleven years of age.

*Haversack*, a weekly story paper for boys from eleven to seventeen years of age.

*Torchbearer*, a weekly story paper for girls from eleven to seventeen years of age.

*High Road*, a story paper for young people; successor to *Our Young People*.

Volumes could be written in providing the background of the story of this sharp advance in curriculum-making. What was achieved by the two larger Methodist bodies in pioneering and creating curriculum for Christian teaching represents one of the highest of any achievements in this area.

We are to learn that this is a continuing task which sometimes seems to become more and more complex.

## 26—CURRICULUM CONSTRUCTION FAR FROM COMPLETE

Much had been achieved in providing teaching materials for the Sunday schools of American Methodism, but experience showed that we were far from bringing the task toward completion. The functions of the curriculum-making group were multiplying. It was called on to deal with missions, the needs of parents, the college campus, and leadership education, to mention only a few.

The *Epworth Era* was in use until the needs of the united program for youth became clearly apparent. Then this periodical and *Highroad* were combined to form *Epworth Highroad*, a journal of religion with senior group lessons, and programs for meetings of young people fifteen to twenty-three years of age. *Worker's Council* and *Sunday School Magazine* were combined



into another periodical for use by all officers and for teachers of youth and adults. *The Adult Student* began to carry electives for adults regularly. On demand from the field these were reprinted in inexpensive form and used as undated courses. *Boys and Girls* was enlarged to serve as the story paper for primaries and juniors. Closely Graded Courses had been developed by the synodicate and were being well received.

The editor of the new youth journal invited one of the bishops to send his greetings, since he had an outstanding record of success in the youth program. We give here his greeting:

I greet this new periodical for the youth of Methodism with great enthusiasm. It comes into the Kingdom of Ideas and Ideals at a critical but truly epochal moment of time. The world is confused and needs a light in the mist. Youth is adrift on a sea of uncertainty, often without a rudder or chart. The world of youth waits for an authentic voice.

I would like to see this new magazine guided by the following ideals:

It should dedicate itself to the elevation of Jesus Christ as the center of life and the answer to the hunger of youth for reality.

It should daringly pierce through the conventionalities and platitudes of dead religious forms and vocabularies and talk the language of today in dealing with the verities of time and eternity.

It should keep its eye on the future and be permeated with the high adventurous spirit that seeks in religion not a balm, but a battle; not a selfish personal salvation, but a new world order in which love shall be triumphant.

It should speak in clarion tones and uncompromising lines against intrenched evils in the social order, and it should dare to risk its popularity by being willing to voice the mind of Jesus in an age that has forgotten many of his most revolutionary principles.

It should be true to the Church and unsparing in its criticism of those shortcomings and sins which make the Church less Christlike than its Founder dreamed it would be when he established it upon the earth.

It should open its pages to the voices of Methodism's young people, thus giving them an avenue of expression and affording a forum of ideas in order that they may share their merging life with the youth of America and of all lands.

Let this new periodical be dedicated to the realism in religion, friendship for all peoples, adventurous living and thinking for the youth of our Church, an unswerving fidelity to the mind and spirit of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "What I Should Like to See the *Epworth Highroad* Stand For," by Paul B. Kern, in the *Epworth Highroad*, January, 1932.

The editors and prospective readers of the new journal had been in touch as plans emerged. At several points the bishop had expressed in challenging fashion what they had been thinking. The cover of the first issue showed a montage of pictures of youth at worship, in discussion and fellowship, considering Christian vocations—always under the sponsorship of the church. Years later when, after unification, this journal was going through a metamorphosis and took the name *Highroad*, the editor restated its purpose:

Put in its simplest terms, *Highroad's* purpose is to give you, Methodist youth in the local church, a leg up on Jacob's ladder. In our imagery that ladder leads to fuller Christian living. We wouldn't if we could, do your climbing for you. . . .

You will want to know about the other young people on Jacob's ladder—what they think and feel and plan—and what the Methodist Youth Fellowship is doing and where. *Highroad* is busy perfecting its machinery for that kind of reporting. This issue goes to press before the first National Conference of the Fellowship, after which we shall select a number of contributing youth editors representing each jurisdiction in the church. These people will be *Highroad's* eyes and ears, report events, trends and currents of thought among youth which have Christian significance. Then, too, we shall arrange for a monthly department conducted by the newly selected secretary of the National Conference [of the Methodist Youth Fellowship] which will keep *Highroad* readers in active touch with its national program.<sup>a</sup>

Thus the greetings and aspirations expressed in the first issue were being carried out with our youth having an opportunity well within the currents of church life to give voice to their insight and convictions and thereby exert great influence upon the policies of their periodical. Certainly such procedures being followed in various youth periodicals were a far cry from the way lessons were prepared for young people less than a century before this time.

As we have shown, missionary education was looked upon by some as "extra-biblical," and therefore to be excluded from the teaching materials of the Sunday school—that is, when the first graded lessons were being developed. Of course, the Methodists had a different idea concerning missions; they went forward with emphasis upon missions in the Sunday school. Close co-

<sup>a</sup> *Highroad*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1941, p. 64.

operation developed between the boards relating to church-school teaching and missionary outreach. We were given a fine example of such interboard co-operation and the resulting inclusion of missionary teaching into the main-line curriculum of the local churches. Channels were opened up to our editorial officers which made it possible to carry fresh and appealing materials from our various fields of work in the church-school periodicals. Where the literature was faithfully used people became conversant with what was taking place in each of our fields. They were led to give regularly and intelligently to missions. During the depression there was no decrease in our church in missionary giving in the church schools.

Many were feeling deep concern over the rather widespread lack of adequate training of candidates for church membership. This led to the strengthening of emphasis upon churchmanship, especially in the materials used with juniors and intermediates. An attractive gift book entitled *My Church Book* was issued to be presented to child candidates at the time when they entered the church fellowship. We also increased this emphasis in vacation church-school texts and in materials for use in expanded sessions of the Sunday church school. At least we made a beginning in trying to meet a serious need in our curriculum. The writer received fine help from his co-workers in the General Board of Christian Education in editing a hymnbook for use in church schools. This was one of the first efforts made to deal with the problem of providing music and hymns for this agency.

None of our problems was more pressing than the guidance of children in their Christian life in the home. The existing periodicals gave some place to this matter, but the home stood in need of a periodical devoted to the inspiration and instruction of parents, family worship services of real meaning to children, and in which they might participate, and other similarly important helps. The launching of *The Christian Home* came about as a sincere effort to make the home a school of religion and a close partner with the church. In the course of time this magazine was so arranged that a class of parents could use it regularly as a part of their course of study.

We hear often that it is difficult to keep abreast of, and meet the needs of, something alive. This is true of persons. It is also true of the vital curriculum of Christian teaching. Our very



efforts to discover and deal with emerging religious needs kept facing us with new demands. Some of our advisers reminded us that the curriculum was proliferating in an alarming fashion. Others were quick to say that it was not expanding rapidly enough. A person deeply committed to this task has this to say:

The Christian faces a new world, no matter where he turns. Those responsible for guiding Christian learning must make many approaches to the problem of providing the materials needed. Let us not return to the past [from "Babel period" to uniformity]. That would be to take flight from our problem. . . . We must face firmly the difficulties which frown upon us—no matter the degree of their fury. The only passage is straight through our problem. We must find the solution as we move forward.

Christian teaching drives faith to deal with every facet of life. Christian teaching helps the learner to find the very motive for living in the purpose of God. It helps the learner to discover that purpose for himself and for all of life. When Christian faith is central to teaching, unity is found amidst diversity. The curriculum is unified at the very time when it is rich and diversified. The curriculum has a central core and drive while it draws upon every significant experience which comes to the learner.

This is a far cry from uniform lessons. The integrated curriculum will be graded and will be relevant to the needs of the person and the situation which he faces. It will take many forms. It will be as much in motion as life itself. At the same time, it will be as unified as life itself.<sup>3</sup>

The Methodists had been working with the International Council of Religious Education as it dealt with the problem of creating and using audio-visual materials in teaching. At the same time we were giving much attention to this matter as we kept at work at the task of curriculum construction. Some idea of the extent and diversity of the work going on can be gained by naming the various groups at work on the curriculum and its related fields—committees were dealing with missionary education, parent education and home co-operation, leadership education, campus-local church relations, vocational choices, motion pictures and radio, vacation-school materials, and temperance

<sup>3</sup> From a chapter entitled "Curriculum Patterns in the Church School" by C. A. Bowen in *Orientation in Religious Education*, ed. P. H. Lotz (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), p. 111.

education. All this activity was in addition to the work of developing continually the extensive mass of materials used in the regular church schools.

The writer cannot resist the impulse to tell of what happened when we attempted to make a new approach to the problem of temperance teaching. The quarterly temperance lesson had served a good purpose but was proving to be increasingly ineffective. We thought of offering electives in this field; however, we knew from experience the limits of this approach. Then we made the daring move of substituting a temperance unit covering one month for a section of uniform lessons for adults, knowing that this would reach a great many classes. Then something like Armageddon descended upon us. The "professionals" in this field of work were shocked that we would substitute anything for the sacrosanct quarterly temperance lesson. The worshipers of uniform lessons accused us of shaking the very "Ark of the Covenant." Adults with little, if any, conviction on the matter managed to sidetrack the temperance unit in one way or another. Letters poured into our offices. We heard from the highest bracket of the VIPs. Naturally we concluded that we must approach the teaching of temperance from now on in less alarming fashion.

The early American Sunday-school leaders realized the importance of supplying reading materials for the schools which they served. Very few printed books and periodicals were available. Just as the Sunday school was one of the pioneer agencies in adult education, the Sunday-school library and the story papers distributed each month at church were opening the way for the modern library and magazine stand. The work of the church school today, however, is different. Those of us who create reading materials are in deadly competition with individuals, causes, and commercial agencies bent on evolving the imagery for our generation. This has brought us to see the importance of what we call our pleasure-reading and cultural periodicals (the successors to the older story papers). We desire that the persons reached in any way by the church be exposed to the imagery of Christianity. We desire that this exposure take place along with the use of the regular teaching materials. We work to enrich the lessons through the pleasure-reading periodicals and to give thrust to the formal teaching by means of ap-

propriate imagery provided in stories, poems, and the like. Viewed in this way, we might say that the story papers are a basic part of the curriculum.

While we had been at work on the varied phases of our task, the needs of remote and less-privileged schools kept throwing their shadows over what we were doing. Here was the problem of illiteracy ominous in its ordinary meaning and terrifying when we thought of the need of these deprived persons in want of some understanding of the Christian faith and life. We were beginning to give serious attention to this matter when one of the finest of our leaders in the field of religious education in China paid us a visit. He described for us the methods used effectively under similar conditions in his work in areas where printed materials could not be used because the people could not read. In brief, a Christian teacher would go to a backward village or town; he would place on a wall or the side of a house a placard. On the placard were a few words of scripture and a sentence or two explaining its meaning and also two or three simple drawings showing what action the teaching called for. The crowd would gather. The teacher would use the placard as he secured the responses of the group. Usually this opened the way for more personal teaching. In some situations it would be possible to distribute fragments of scripture. Our visitor thus reduced to the simplest terms the problem which we faced. His visit gave us encouragement as we kept working on the task presented to us. Much more will be told about what was accomplished.

The construction of curriculum was far from complete. In fact, our task seemed to be growing beyond our capacity to master it. However, we shall see that in union we found strength.

## 27—UNITED AND STRONGER

An important turning point in Methodist history occurred in 1940 when the Methodist Protestant Church, the Methodist



Episcopal Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, were united to form The Methodist Church. That this event had great meaning for curriculum construction goes without saying. In this chapter we shall attempt to indicate changes made and their promise for a stronger program of creating and using materials of teaching in the church schools of Methodism.

At the time of unification the Methodist Protestant Church was using the following periodicals for officers and teachers: *Our Teacher's Journal*, a quarterly containing helps on uniform lessons for use by workers in the young people's and adult departments of the church school; *Our Primary Teacher*, a quarterly containing helps on group graded lessons for primaries; *Our Junior Teacher*, a quarterly containing helps on group graded lessons for juniors.

For its officers and teachers the Methodist Episcopal Church provided, in addition to teachers' manuals in the closely graded courses: *Church School Journal*, a monthly for use by officers and teachers in the young people's and adult departments; *Elementary Magazine*, a monthly for use by officers and teachers in the children's department; *Studies for Youth* (teacher's edition), a pupil's quarterly for older youth carrying a sixteen-page supplement composed of teacher's helps; *Intermediate Quarterly*, (teacher's edition), a pupil's quarterly carrying a sixteen-page supplement composed of teacher's helps.

For its officers and teachers the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, provided, in addition to teachers' manuals in closely graded courses: *Church School Magazine*, a monthly for use by officers and teachers in the young people's and adult departments; and *Elementary Teacher*, a monthly for officers and teachers in the children's department.

The Methodist Protestant Church provided the following periodicals for children: *Group Pupil Lesson Stories*, *Our Primary Class*, folders containing group lessons for primaries; *Little Bible Lesson Pictures*, cards carrying uniform lessons; *Our Junior Class*, a quarterly containing group lessons for juniors; and *Our Children*, a story paper for children.

The Methodist Episcopal Church provided the following periodicals for children: *Berean Beginners' Pictures and Stories*, a picture card containing group lessons for beginners; *Berean Lesson Pictures*, cards containing group lessons for primaries;

*The Primary Quarterly*, a set of folders containing group lessons for primaries; *Picture Story Paper*, a four-page story paper for primaries; *Junior Weekly*, an eight-page story paper for juniors; *Boys' and Girls' Quarterly*, containing group lessons for juniors.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, provided the following periodicals for children: *Stories for the Little Child*, folders containing group lessons for beginners; *Our Little People*, folders containing group lessons for juniors; *Olivet Picture Cards*, containing group lessons for primaries; *Boys and Girls*, an eight-page story paper for primaries and juniors.

The Methodist Protestant Church provided the following periodicals for youth: *The New Guide*, a story paper for older young people; *The Hi-Way*, a story paper for older juniors and intermediates; *Our Intermediate Quarterly*, containing uniform lessons; and *Our Senior Quarterly*, containing uniform lessons for older young people.

The Methodist Episcopal Church provided the following periodicals for youth: *The Epworth Herald*, a thirty-two-page weekly for young people containing programs and cultural reading materials. (This periodical was issued outside the offices of the church-school editors.); *The Portal*, an eight-page story paper for intermediate girls; *The Target*, an eight-page story paper for intermediate boys; *The Classmate*, an eight-page story paper for young people; *Intermediate Quarterly*, containing group lessons for intermediates; *Studies for Youth*, a quarterly containing group lessons for seniors; and *The Illustrated Quarterly*, containing uniform lessons for intermediates and seniors.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, provided the following periodicals for youth: *The Epworth Highroad*, a monthly for seniors and young people containing group lessons, cultural reading materials, and programs for youth meetings; *The Epworth League Meeting for Intermediates*, folders containing programs for meetings of intermediates; *Cargo*, a twelve-page story paper for intermediates; *The Methodist Intermediate Quarterly*, containing group lessons for intermediates; and *The Methodist Senior Quarterly*, containing uniform lessons for young people and adults.

The Methodist Protestant Church provided the following periodicals for adults: *Our Home Quarterly*, a sixty-four-page

quarterly containing uniform lessons prepared for older persons; *Our Advanced Quarterly*, a sixty-four-page quarterly containing uniform lessons; and the *Worship Leaflet*, four pages. The Methodist Protestant Church syndicated its material for other denominations, mostly from the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Methodist Episcopal Church provided the following periodicals for adults: *The Adult Bible Class Monthly*, thirty-two pages containing uniform lessons and enrichment materials with an occasional elective course; *The Senior Quarterly*, sixty-four pages containing uniform lessons for young people and adults; *The Home Quarterly*, a ninety-six-page periodical for older home members, containing uniform lessons and other features; *The Home Visitor*, containing material found in *The Home Quarterly* along with suggestions for home department workers; *First Steps in Christian Nurture*, a quarterly for use of parents with younger children; *Service and Lesson Leaf*, uniform lessons and worship programs.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, provided the following periodicals for adults: *The Adult Student*, a sixty-four-page monthly containing uniform lessons, elective courses, and various magazine materials; *The Methodist Senior Quarterly*, already listed; and *The Christian Home*, a monthly for the parents of children still in the home and older home members.

From the information which we have just reported we see that the three uniting churches issued nine periodicals for officers and teachers in the church school; seventeen periodicals for children, sixteen for youth, and thirteen for adults—a total of fifty-four periodicals. The Church School Closely Graded Courses used in two of the churches included thirty undated items along with various accessories. The estimate of elective courses for youth and adults reached about four hundred items. To these were to be added texts for vacation schools, weekday schools, leadership schools, World Friendship units, and the like.

The existence of such an extensive collection of curriculum items created a situation which could easily have become confused. Fortunately, however, for several years we had been making studies of the literature situation. We found out not only what was being used, but also what the persons who used the materials thought of them, and also what they said that they needed. Some wanted scripture material to be memorized; others



called for uniform lessons dealing only with "religion" and having nothing to say about making a living, worshiping, and dealing with ordinary activities of life. Some asked for lessons simple enough to be used by the uneducated pupil and the unprepared teacher, cheap and labor-saving. There was some demand for what came to be called "scissors programs" for young people—material printed so that they could be cut out and passed out to those who were to participate. (If an advertisement was carried on the opposite of the pages, this would help.)

Other respondents were positive in their comments. They called for literature with familiar imagery and contact with experience; literature able to broaden interest, even disturb the passive.

Out of the advice and information received we could detect certain negative factors at work in the literature situation: no understanding of what Christian teaching means and implies; little understanding of the church-school literature, its purpose and how it should be used; lack of personal commitment by parents and teachers to the calling of Christian teaching; low-pressure financial policies affecting the church school; rapid turnover of workers; lack of home co-operation; limited teaching situations and equipment; the wide variety of situations in which church-school literature is used; literalistic ideas about the Bible and religious dogma; insufficient helps provided for officers and teachers; fear of having Christian teaching affect local conditions; and a defensive attitude toward the general agencies of the church.

Our study showed that, for the most part, the church-school literature adequately met the needs of those who used it where there was good leadership and financial support and at least a partial understanding of the function of the literature. However, three questions came to light: Should the number of periodicals be multiplied to meet the widely varying needs of our thousands of schools? Should those who create the literature try to satisfy only the untrained, the uncommitted, and the limited? Should those who create curriculum expect education to make possible the use of life-centered materials all over the church?

It was not possible to find any quick solution to our problem. We had to adjust our people to somewhat new materials and to look toward a better day.

The first General Conference of the new church which met in 1940 provided for the creation of curriculum for the church schools in the following legislation:

¶ 894. There shall be an Editor of Church School Publications, elected quadrennially by the Board of Education from nominations of a Joint Committee of the Board of Publication and Editorial Division of the Board of Education. . . . The election of the Editor of Church School Publications shall be subject to confirmation by the Board of Publication. . . .

¶ 895. The Editor of Church School Publications shall be responsible for the preparation of all curriculum materials, including periodicals, undated materials, and books authorized for use in the program of Christian Education. . . .

¶ 896. There shall be a Curriculum Committee which shall include in its membership the Editor of Church School Publications, the Book Editor, and the Publishing Agents, which shall determine the curriculum of the Church School. The Editor of Church School Publications, after final approval by the Board of Education, shall prepare the materials to be produced for use in Church Schools, young people's societies, training schools, and all other agencies related in any way to the work of the Board of Education. . . .

¶ 899. There shall be one completely co-ordinated system of literature published by The Methodist Publishing House for the entire Methodist Church. This literature shall be of such type and variety as to meet the needs of all groups of our people.<sup>1</sup>

This legislation was similar to what had preceded it and represented an evolution of the concept of curriculum and a widening of the concept of the church school. The task of creating the literature was so large and complex that clear regulations covering the relation of the educational and publishing phases of the matter were necessary. The first Curriculum Committee was made up of the officers named above, along with the general secretary and heads of the Division of the Local Church and of Educational Institutions (or Higher Education) of the Board; the secretary of the Interboard Committee on Missionary Education and ten other members elected by the Board of Education. Members of the staff were consulting members of the Committee without vote. Other persons might be appointed to advise the

<sup>1</sup> 1940 *Discipline*, The Methodist Church, pp. 284-86. Copyright, 1940, by Whitmore and Stone.

Committee on special matters to which they were related. The church was so large and the Curriculum Committee was to deal with so many matters of concern to so many interests, that such consultation was necessary.

Those of us more closely related to the hectic operations out of which came plans for the new publications recall with special clearness some of the experiences of crisis through which we passed. For instance, in a few weeks after the adjournment of the First General Conference of The Methodist Church in May, 1940, we were to bring tentative plans coming out of long study to completion. We had to secure approval of proposed periodicals, prospectuses; have these criticized; revise them until finally approved. Before the end of the year we had secured the approval of twenty-seven periodicals—three for officers, teachers, and parents; four for adults; fourteen for youth; and six for children. We also suggested four new publications for use in very small schools with limited leadership.

By the early spring of 1941 the two executive editors reported the following publications in process of publication:

For officers, teachers, and parents: *Child Guidance in Christian Living*, a sixty-four-page monthly for officers, teachers, and other workers in the children's division of the church school. It succeeded *Beginners' Quarterly*, *Our Primary Teacher*, *Our Junior Teacher*, *The Elementary Magazine*, and *The Elementary Teacher*.

*The Church School*, a sixty-four-page monthly for use by general superintendents, teachers, and other workers in the youth division and the adult division. It succeeded *Our Teacher's Journal*, *The Church School Journal*, and *The Church School Magazine*.

*The Christian Home*, a forty-eight-page monthly for parents. It included for a few issues a special section, continuing *First Steps in Christian Nurture*.

For use in the children's division: *Beginners' Lesson Pictures*, a packet of cards containing group lessons for beginners. It succeeded *Beginners' Lesson Stories*, *Berean Beginners' Pictures and Stories*, and *Stories for the Little Child*.

*The Primary Class*, a packet of four-page folders containing group lessons for primaries. It succeeded *Group Pupil's Lesson Stories*, *Our Primary Class*, *Primary Quarterly*, and *Our Little*



*People*. Related to *The Primary Class* was *Primary Picture Roll*, large pictures for use in teaching primaries: also *Bible Picture Cards* with pictures and stories related to primary group lessons.

*Junior Quarterly*, a forty-page periodical containing group lessons for juniors. It succeeded *Our Junior Class*, *Junior Lessons*, and *Boys' and Girls' Quarterly*.

*Pictures and Stories*, a four-page illustrated weekly story paper for primaries. It succeeded *Our Children*, *Picture Story Paper*, and *Boys and Girls*. *Trails for Juniors*, an eight-page illustrated weekly story paper for juniors. It succeeded *Junior Weekly* and *Boys and Girls*.

For use in the youth division: *Lessons for Intermediates*, a forty-eight-page quarterly containing group lessons for intermediates. It succeeded *Our Intermediate Quarterly*, *The Intermediate Quarterly*, and *The Methodist Intermediate Quarterly*.

*Epworth League Meeting for Intermediates*, a four-page weekly folder for use in meetings of the intermediate fellowship.

*Highroad*, a sixty-four-page monthly youth journal of religion prepared especially for use by persons fifteen to twenty-three years of age, containing group lessons for seniors and programs for meetings of seniors and young people. It succeeded *The Epworth Herald* and *Epworth Highroad*.

*Studies for Youth*. A forty-eight-page quarterly containing group lessons for seniors.

*Worship for Youth Leaders*, a thirty-two-page monthly for young people who are leaders of youth and adult workers in the youth department.

*The Abingdon Quarterly*, a forty-eight-page periodical containing uniform lessons for older youth and adults. It succeeded *The Illustrated Quarterly*.

*Boys Today*, an eight-page illustrated story paper for intermediate boys. It succeeded *The Hi-Way*, *Target*, and *Cargo*. *Girls Today*, an eight-page illustrated story paper for intermediate girls which succeeded *The Hi-Way*, *Portal*, and *Cargo*. *Classmate*, a sixteen-page weekly for seniors, young people, and adults. It succeeded *The New Guide*, and *Classmate*.

For use in the adult department: *The Adult Student*, a ninety-six-page monthly publication for adult classes in the church school, containing uniform lessons and elective courses. It succeeded *Adult Bible Class Monthly* and *Adult Student*.

*Home Quarterly*, a ninety-six-page monthly publication containing uniform lessons and worship materials for older adults. It succeeded *The Home Quarterly*, *The Home Visitor*, and *Our Home Quarterly*.

*Wesley Quarterly*, a sixty-four-page quarterly containing uniform lessons for adults. It succeeded *Our Advanced Quarterly*, *Senior Quarterly*, and *The Methodist Senior Quarterly*.

*Challenge*, a forty-eight-page quarterly to be distributed to persons who have become interested in the church school, but who have not joined the church.

*Worship and Lesson Leaf*, for use in worship services and containing the uniform lesson text. It succeeded *The Worship Leaflet*, *Methodist Lesson Leaf*, and *Service and Lesson Leaf*.

When the periodicals began to circulate, the editors faced the need of revising certain courses of the Church School Closely Graded Courses. We still had to co-operate with the various persons related to the curriculum task in creating policies and procedures covering the large number of undated materials of various types, and we needed to move rapidly to deal with emerging needs which the undated materials could meet. For a brief period, however, we paused to look at what had been done so far. We showed an exhibit of the new periodical literature. Many interested persons came to see it. The Sunday-school staff of one of our sister denominations paid us a visit and were outspoken in their favorable comments. Many liked the more attention-getting appearance of the periodicals. Some wondered how it had been possible within a little more than a year to reconstruct so extensively the materials which had been in use. We explained that preparatory work had been going on for many months before the actual reconstruction began. Those especially interested in curriculum were quick to note the trend toward elimination of the rigid and static, and provision of curriculum which lent itself to vital Christian teaching. Perhaps the most significant fact about the event was the revelation of the desire of a great united church to wrestle with the fact of the child. We were taking the consequences of our commitment to the value which Jesus placed on the learner—the one in whom Jesus, as he taught, seemed to place so much confidence.

The preparation of a text such as we have undertaken goes forward under definite limitations of space. Thus the writer is

prevented from describing in detail the highly important help which editors continually receive from their associates in the Division of the Local Church and the Division of Educational Institutions of the Board of Education of The Methodist Church. Some of our best curriculum appears in the magazine sections of the periodicals, much of it written by specialists in these divisions. They also help create units of lessons and programs. In the Curriculum Committee they work side by side with editors as the problems of the committee are dealt with. They reach the church constituency with help in understanding and using the teaching materials. They help make research and experiment possible. They help conduct seminars and other such studies. These associates in labor make a major contribution to the success of the enterprise of curriculum making.

The reader may have noted the use of "Sabbath school," "Sunday school," and "church school" as names for the institution under consideration. The Methodist Church has adopted the term "church school" because we have here the school of the church. In the church school we teach the Bible and also worship, faith, Christian living, missions, church history, and the like. The church school meets on Sunday and often during the week. We think that the name for this agency is appropriate.

We had merely cracked open our problem. There were many uncompleted tasks. There were crying needs which we had not heeded adequately, which we shall discuss in the next chapter.

## 28—NOT FORGETTING THE LEAST

We have pointed out that, although we had been able to give attention to many matters facing the editors, the problem of supplying appropriate teaching materials to the smaller and less privileged schools remained. Some felt honest doubt about proceeding in this matter. As they saw it, we had many schools which were able to use existing materials but which had poor leadership and little understanding of Christian teaching. If we



provided simplified and less expensive materials, these schools would use them, even though unsuitable to their situation. Such new materials as we contemplated might undercut much of our educational program. These doubts were sound and were convincingly expressed.

On the other hand it was intolerable for us to continue to postpone the attempt to help our neediest situations. It might appear that we were indifferent toward the schools which needed our help most sorely. Assistance came when the conference and local church workers had their first meeting with the general board workers in what later became The Methodist Conference on Christian Education. This group made a strong demand for materials for the schools under consideration.

We had some distressing facts brought to our attention. Only a small percentage of our church schools seemed to have any grasp of the meaning of Christian teaching. The operation of the schools themselves revealed this condition. Often they were supplied with materials from commercial publishers whose lessons were quite unrelated to the things for which our program of Christian education stood. We were told of situations in which workers from the outside were able to eliminate our own literature, and, in some cases, to get the school moving in the direction of independence of The Methodist Church. The situation commanding our concern was even more critical than we had imagined.

In May, 1941, the Curriculum Committee was considering tentative outlines of lessons for younger and older children in such less-privileged situations along with this preliminary statement:

In harmony with the action of the Committee on Curriculum at its last meeting, this committee [on Curriculum for Small Schools] has undertaken to carry out its commission to bring in plans, proposals, and outlines for curriculum material for use in children's classes in the small church. Careful consideration has been given to the needs of the small church and the committee has tried to visualize the situation with its many limitations in mind. . . .

It was deemed wise that outlines for nine months, beginning with January, 1942, be submitted at this time and that at a later date outlines of a cycle of lessons for several years be presented. We, therefore, present for your consideration two outlines: one for lessons for younger children and one for lessons for older boys and girls.

The following principles were considered in formulating these outlines:

That the material should have broad gradations; that its content should be obviously religious and should give emphasis to the Bible; that the lessons should be complete within themselves; that the material should take into consideration the situation of the one-room church, seeing its needs as a whole from within; that it should recognize leaders' limitations, thought patterns, and lack of familiarity with educational procedures; and that it should reflect the experiences of those who should use it.<sup>1</sup>

The Curriculum Committee gave approval to this report of progress and we developed outlines graded to the needs (as we understood them) of children approximately four to eight years of age; of boys and girls approximately nine to fourteen; of youth, with the age range loosely drawn; and for adults; also helps of the simplest nature for officers and teachers.

We wanted to use every precaution as we proceeded, so our first move was to issue experimental lessons for use in selected schools. It would be hard to find a more interesting chapter in the history of curriculum development in our denomination than that dealing with this experiment. Sixteen secretaries of annual conference boards of education located in the six jurisdictions of the church and certain other interested persons accepted our invitation to sponsor a limited number of experiments in their conferences. They selected church schools hampered by most of the difficulties which we knew to exist. They chose workers who realized the needs of these schools and knew how to help them make a study of their situations. There were the usual conferences to bring all of us to understand our task. The Methodist Publishing House invested several thousand dollars in printing the lessons to be used. The first visit to a given school was to "sell" the experiment to the workers and help them understand what was involved. When the visitor deposited the lessons every effort was made to get the users to realize what they were to do. Within six weeks after the experiment began the visitor met again with the workers of the given church involved to see how things were going. In about ten weeks another visit was made to introduce the materials for the next quarter and to check again

<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of Committee on Curriculum, May, 1941, p. 14.*

on progress. At the end of twenty-six weeks the visitor helped the local workers fill out the report which they were to make on what had been done. The local workers were urged to add as many of their own comments as they desired to the regular answers given. (It was from these informal comments that some of the best data was made available.) The secretary of the annual conference and his helpers explained the local church report and made their own. When all the reports reached us we had a valuable mass of information for our own study.

For use in the experiment we provided: A four-color lesson and picture card, entitled *Bible Story Card*, thirteen cards for each of the two quarters during which the experiment went on.

A forty-page illustrated quarterly for older children entitled *Lessons from the Bible* with materials graded to the capacities of this group.

A forty-eight-page illustrated quarterly for youth entitled *Followers of Jesus*, with appropriate lessons.

A ninety-six-page illustrated quarterly for teachers and other workers entitled *The Christian Worker*. This periodical contained helps for teachers of younger children, older children, youth, and adults. It also contained worship programs for the whole school and programs for meetings of the youth fellowship. A section was reserved for practical suggestions in doing the work of the church school operating under difficulties.

It was decided to use *Wesley Quarterly* as the periodical for adults.

Nominal prices were placed on the periodicals to give the experiment some dignity. It has been difficult for the writer to refrain from giving the story of the experiment at length. Sixty-five schools began the experiment, fifty-four of them carrying on the work for twenty-six weeks to its conclusion. The workers in some situations were not literate enough to write comments, and these were written by the visitors. The answers to the questions asked gave information serious enough, but the informal comments were almost terrifying. After we had put the reports together into somewhat consistent form, they were studied by a number of persons in the general offices. All of us were deeply impressed.

When the six-month period had been completed some of the schools tried to order more of the experimental lessons and were



disappointed when told (as they had been before) that there would be no more available. Most of the schools ordered group lessons for future use. Forty-five schools urged that broadly graded lessons be provided regularly for them and schools like them. Some graded themselves according to the materials used. A few asked that training courses for officers and teachers be provided. We prepared a fairly lengthy report on the experiment and made it available throughout the church. It was discussed thoroughly by conference workers. These leaders reported that twenty-one hundred schools of the type dealt with in the experiment existed throughout the denomination. The Curriculum Committee and the Board of Education took action requesting that we proceed to make broadly graded lessons for our schools of this type. In a later report to the Board of Education, the secretary of the Editorial Division presented the following:

It has been over ten years since editors in the uniting churches began to plan for supplying materials for the thousands of church schools with three or four classes within our constituency. In its meeting on February 15 [1945] the General Board of Education took action which opened the way for the production of materials developed with the needs of these schools especially in mind. . . . They are pleased to report that the revisions ordered have been made and that certain new periodicals are now being published.

Classes of younger children in smaller schools will continue to use *Primary Class*, a folder containing International Group Graded Lessons for primaries. A new quarterly is being provided for teachers using *Primary Class* in schools with three or four classes. This quarterly is called *Children's Class—Teacher's Quarterly*.

Classes of older children will use the revised *Junior Quarterly* containing International Group Graded Lessons for juniors. A new quarterly has been prepared for teachers of older children in these schools. This periodical is called *Boys and Girls Class—Teacher's Quarterly*.

A new quarterly entitled *Bible Lessons for Youth* has been prepared for use in schools with three or four classes. This new quarterly will carry graded lessons based on outlines of International Group Graded Lessons for Seniors. A new quarterly has been prepared for teachers of youth in these schools. It is called *Bible Lessons for Youth—Teacher's Quarterly*.

A new quarterly has been prepared for adult pupils in smaller schools located in our rural and small town areas. . . . [It] is called *Bible Lessons for Adults*. It will contain simplified treatment of International Uniform

Lessons. A new quarterly has also been prepared for teachers whose pupils use *Bible Lessons for Adults*. This quarterly bears the name *Bible Lessons for Adults—Teacher's Quarterly*.

The superintendents of Sunday schools with three or four classes will find the general worship services in *Bible Lessons for Adults—Teacher's Quarterly*. This quarterly will also carry several pages of helps prepared by the Division of the Local Church of the General Board of Education.<sup>2</sup>

The publication of the broadly graded lessons was announced. But they were placed in schools largely under the guidance of the conference workers. The result was that no noticeable reduction in the circulation of the regular materials occurred. The publishers reported that hundreds of our schools which had given up the use of Methodist materials were recaptured. The new material was the resultant of various compromises. Only in this way could we get approval of its publication. At the same time it was a new movement in the curriculum field. It seemed to set off a chain reaction, affecting various phases of our work. It was no longer necessary to publish *Abingdon Quarterly*. *Studies for Youth* was discontinued and group lessons for seniors were placed in *Highroad*. We launched a periodical for older youth under the title *Graded Lessons for Young People* (later changed to *Christian Action*). *Highroad* ceased to carry simpler youth programs and lessons which could be used by older youth; it became a periodical definitely directed toward meeting the needs of seniors. New Closely Graded Courses were coming into use. After securing fine co-operation from the leaders concerned we issued an elective for college students entitled *A College Compass*.

We became intrigued with the preparation of what we came to call *Bible Action Pictures*. For some time publishers were issuing cartoons depicting Bible stories. One eastern newspaper carried these in color as a Sunday supplement. The publishers of this daily began to circularize thousands of church schools of various denominations to place weekly reprints. After several ineffectual attempts to develop cartoons co-operatively we launched such an enterprise ourselves. After some research we selected dramatic narratives from the Bible which seemed suitable for portrayal in this medium. Scripts were written and

<sup>2</sup> *Year Book*, Board of Education, 1945. Report of Secretary of Editorial Division, pp. 56-57.

closely criticized. Our art editor secured the services of skillful artists to provide the drawings. Both drawing and script were criticized further to see that the interpretation was accurate and the figures and costumes appropriate. The cartoons were published in the two intermediate story papers, the first sequence appearing under the title, "The Adventures of the Apostle Paul." At one time a dozen denominations syndicated *Bible Action Pictures*. A number of the sequences were reprinted in book form. The widespread demand for such pictures subsided after several years, but we had been able to capitalize on it with some effectiveness.

When many of our young people and adults were in service we provided them with a gift book entitled *Your Church Speaks*; also a small convenient quarterly containing appropriate lessons, which was called *Service*; later a little publication called *Contact*, which carried reprints from various periodicals. All these were finally merged into *The Link* issued by the Service Men's Christian League.

Although we seemed to be working at top speed, new needs kept emerging. From various directions the request came to do something to improve the preparation of candidates for church membership. Materials of almost every kind were being used in our churches, some far outdated, others unworthy of use in a great church, others which had been prepared by other denominations. In a number of instances no preparation was given the candidates. The pastor merely took the children into the church. The situation was serious. Several general agencies of the church made a survey of the situation. They had no authority to prepare any material of this kind, but they were encouraged to do so because of the seriousness of the situation. Out of this co-operative work came a series of church membership manuals. The editors were made responsible for securing writers and getting the manuals published. The series consisted of a manual for boys and girls entitled *Your Church and You*; a manual for youth entitled *My Church*; a manual for adults entitled *I Join the Church*; and *A Church Membership Manual for Pastors*. These were well received. The next General Conference approved the manuals and set up a commission to deal with the matter officially.

We felt easier in our consciences as we came to realize that we



had not forgotten "the least" among our constituency. The less-privileged schools had usable teaching materials. The pressure of new demands kept reaching us. We kept at work. Yet we could not forget that deep realities underlying curriculum must be continually considered.

## 29—CHRISTIAN FAITH—BASIS AND OBJECTIVE

One of the misconceptions concerning the curriculum of Christian education is that it is only slightly related to religious experience. This misconception lies at the base of most of the stock criticisms directed against vital teaching materials. The fact of the matter is that faith is the force counted upon to bring forth Christian living. Our curriculum is concerned with Christian faith, its nurture and its rise to control over personal and social living. Such faith is both the basis on which we build our curriculum and the objective toward which it is directed. Our understanding of faith may not coincide in all the details, but we recognize this basic fact. ✓

One of the most vivid of the writer's recollections is of an experience through which he and his co-workers passed not long after Methodist unification. The members of the various staffs had come from different sections of the church with varied backgrounds and religious points of view to which we were deeply committed. This fact was to prove to be an obstacle to our efforts to throw ourselves freely into the mutual consideration our formidable and challenging task and its basic meaning. There was a certain reserve among us which almost grew to the point of suspicion at times. Then one of the meetings became the occasion of suggesting that we find out the main points around which we might build some sort of religious agreement. After much hesitation we agreed to consider together the fact of God, the Bible, Jesus Christ, the church, and the kingdom of God. By

common agreement we selected a well-prepared and outstanding leader of the denomination to interpret each of these subjects. During the course of these presentations we were to ask questions for clarification but to enter into no discussion. Afterward we engaged in a rather thorough discussion "within the family" of what our guests had told us. Our group was made up of too many sincere and strong-minded believers for us to arrive at more than a fairly good consensus of judgment. But we were free to share our faith and state our particular points of view. As Christians we agreed and differed in the spirit of understanding. We found out that each of us made the Christian faith the basis of his work. There was a new climate of appreciation among us. We were under attack because of insistence of teaching persons that Christian faith must become alive in its essence and motive, affecting all aspects of existence. The fact that we were coming to understand one another was most reassuring. The writer had good reason to cherish such an experience.

Now that we felt freer to inquire after the basic things in curriculum making, it was possible for us to set up a committee to advise the editor when he reported the increasing concern in some sections of the church over the emphasis on Christian social action set forth in the church-school literature. The editor was not moved by such pressure, but he asked for advice from this Committee of Principles, speaking, to some extent, for all our group. He found real help in the statement developed by the committee under the title, "Some Points of Needed Emphasis in Making the Curriculum of Christian Education," from which we quote certain salient paragraphs:

The three areas that seem most controversial are war and peace, race relations, and economic relations. While many units contain implications concerning these areas, one is impressed by the small percentage of units dealing specifically with them. The emphasis upon social action is not excessive in relation to other emphases.

In response to specific questions presented by the Editor of Church School Publications, the committee expresses its judgment as follows:

1. The elimination of controversial subjects from the curriculum is neither possible nor desirable.

2. Controversial matters will find some place in all types of curriculum; but undated and elective materials because of their nature

and use offer the best opportunities for thorough consideration of controversial questions.

3. The introduction of controversial elements into the curriculum will lead inevitably to some misunderstanding and some criticism.

4. Treatment of controversial questions requires that attention be given to the development of competent leadership as well as to questions of frequency and spacing of emphases.

5. The curriculum of Christian education may well give major emphasis to religious values and principles, leaving much latitude in methods of implementation.

This statement came into existence slowly. We had much inter-staff discussion. The Curriculum Committee discussed it thoroughly and more than once called for revisions. It aroused almost turbulent interest when brought before a meeting of deans and professors in our theological seminaries. The statement was discussed in the Board of Education and aroused so much interest that the chairman of the Board had difficulty getting other matters considered. After giving approval the Board asked that the statement be given church-wide distribution. Several paragraphs should be quoted in this connection:

It is the purpose of Christian education to assist persons to live in right relation with God, their heavenly Father, through faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and Lord, and in right relations with other persons through the development in themselves of the spirit of Jesus and the expression of that spirit in all their relationships. . . .

Basic in Christian experience is the direct relation of man to God—a Father-child relation wherein the Father expresses his character in revelation and love, meeting the deepest needs of his children and becoming the object of the highest commitment and loyalty. . . .

The curriculum is designed to assist persons to become aware of God and to live in right relations with him. . . . Pupils will be led to conceive God as the creator and sustainer of the universe and as acting always with knowledge and wisdom and power. . . . It is the Christian view not only that God is available to men but that he takes the initiative in seeking to bring men into right relation to himself, into citizenship in his Kingdom, and thus into the fulfillment of the true destiny of man. . . .

It was the purpose of Jesus to lead men to a life that has its source in God. He is the Way to God, the Word of God, the Supreme Authority

<sup>1</sup> *Minutes, Committee on Curriculum, December, 1946, pp. 6-7.*



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concerning God, God incarnate, the Saviour of men. This fact emphasizes the primary principle in the making of the curriculum of Christian education: God is to be interpreted in terms of the revelation of Jesus Christ, and all aspects of Christian teaching are to be viewed and developed in the light of his revelation. . . .

The Bible should be used with primary regard to Christian outcomes in the lives of persons. The important matter is the way persons think and feel, believe and act. The end of the educational process is not to learn to repeat a certain amount of Bible or any other material, but to develop Christlike persons and a Christian society. . . .

The curriculum of Christian education is concerned with giving assistance to the whole life of persons in their growing Christian experience. It is concerned to assist growing persons more and more to see God as he is made known in Jesus Christ; to yield themselves in loving and loyal obedience to the will of God, to grow in that fellowship, human and divine, that is an ever deepening fellowship with the heavenly Father and with all his believing children. It is concerned with the preparation of growing Christians to live as Christians in the midst of an unchristian world. It is concerned that such an impact may be made upon that world that the Christian people may find their lives by losing them, and may increasingly leaven the lump, so that the kingdom of God may be an ever coming kingdom, and that more and more his will may be done on earth.<sup>2</sup>

There was much about the matter which this statement did not say, but it was a significant beginning in our efforts to state what we believed and what we hoped under God to bring to pass as Christian educators. It was hard to measure the strength of the impact made on the church.

Thousands of copies were discussed by pastors, teachers, local church directors, writers, seminary professors, and many others with a concern for Christian education and its curriculum. Many aspects of this complex question were not dealt with. The statement was too brief. Its writers did not think of themselves as adequate to discuss some of the factors involved. But it was satisfying to know that the church had before it a fairly adequate statement of the point of view and purpose of those responsible for the making of its curriculum.

Along with the many favorable comments came the demand

<sup>2</sup> *Some Points of Needed Emphasis in Making the Curriculum of Christian Education*, pp. 3-16. (A Supplement to the Report of the Curriculum Committee of the General Board of Education, The Methodist Church, 1947.)

on the part of the Curriculum Committee that we go further in our efforts to discover what is implied in Christian education. This led to the appointment of a Committee on Educational Principles in the Curriculum to carry forward this enterprise. We were expected to assemble accounts of experiences in teaching, use of materials, points of view, and concepts of the meaning of curriculum. The new committee limited the scope of its work to dealing with four aspects of the problem: the discovery of the basic Christian beliefs from which the principles of Christian education are derived; the description of the educational task of church and home; the teaching function as understood by Protestants; and the implications for curriculum construction coming out of the discoveries and insights achieved. A number of us had given much time in the International Council of Religious Education when the same basic matters had come under discussion. We were able to make use of some of the things brought to light in that co-operative effort.

As the committee indicated in its statement, since Christianity in its essence is living experience, the Christian religion is more than a single, or even several, experiences.

It is a whole life lived out in the dimensions of acceptance, love, and obedience toward God. This means that the Christian life is never static. The real Christian should continuously examine, clarify, and expand his beliefs, purify and deepen his love toward God and fellow man, refine and strengthen his Christian purposes, and sharpen his strategy for the realization of Christian ideals in his own life and in the life of the world. Christian education is a lifelong adventure of living and learning.<sup>a</sup>

The statement goes on to make strong affirmations about God, man, the Bible, and the Christian fellowship (the church):

Since the relationship between God and the individual is best understood in terms of love and fellowship between persons, it is not enough to teach students about God, but is an obligation of the Christian educator to bring his students into living fellowship with God. . . .

The curriculum should provide for the continual expansion of the conception of God in keeping with developing interests and growing understanding. . . .

Just as some teaching about God is far less than Christian, so some

<sup>a</sup> *Educational Principles in the Curriculum*, 1952, p. 9.

teaching about man fails to tally with the things which Jesus taught and Christian faith comprehends. When man is looked upon as hopelessly depraved, Christian education is to be seen as something foolish. If Christian faith and life are to be taught with conviction one must understand man to be educable in the things of the spirit.<sup>4</sup>

Christian education naturally centers in Jesus Christ. The curriculum of Christian education is Christ-centered. In the statement this is given impressive expression:

Jesus Christ is at the center of the purposes of Christian education. The controlling idea and motive of everything done in the name of Christian education should be that all those engaged in it as teachers or students should come increasingly to know Christ, to love him and trust him, to accept him as Lord and Saviour, and by the power of the Holy Spirit given through a life of fellowship, service, and faith to develop a character like that of Jesus. . . .

The Bible, and particularly the New Testament, is the source through which God's self-revelation is to be understood. However, it should never be used in proof-text fashion, and there is no reason why every lesson should propose to be an application of a passage of Scripture of standard length. . . . The most authoritative passages of all are those which the consensus of Christian judgment accepts as the authentic account of Jesus' life, teachings, and character.<sup>5</sup>

The Christian fellowship found in the church is to be used as effective curriculum for Christian teaching. The report indicates the importance of the learning possibilities which the Christian fellowship provides:

Christians believe that the Church is the spiritual community through which the living spirit of Christ is most vitally related to the life of the world. It is the continuing incarnation—the word made flesh in the modern world. It is a fellowship of faith in Christ, a community of persons dedicated to Christ's will and way, the body of Christ in which his spirit lives, and through which it works to transform and redeem the world.<sup>6</sup>

The statement is specific in its interpretation of the nature of Christian education. At the time it was being prepared, some of our friends and co-workers were confused over what appeared

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17, 18.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.



to be the identification of Christian education and secular education. The report affirms that:

As Christian *education*, our movement takes its place in one frame of reference. The point of view has to do with the ways in which human beings learn, with the circumstances that make learning possible, with the external social situations that determine to a large measure what is learned, and the perfection of teaching methods to assure effective and permanent learning.

As *Christian* education, our movement makes clear that it is not education in general but that it is a particular type of education. The clear implication is that content, method, and objectives are to be understood from a Christian point of view with certain basic affirmations about the nature of God, the nature of the universe, the nature of man, and the kind of life into which he is to be inducted by means of the educational process. . . .

It is frequently urged that the shaping of a curriculum of Christian education should be completely based upon the needs of the learner. "The needs of the pupil are the law of the school," we are told. . . . Yet the slogan needs further scrutiny.

Here, as is so often the case, a valid principle becomes misleading when it is pressed into service as a complete statement of educational theory. *Pupil needs* standing by themselves can hardly suffice as self-contained and autonomous criteria. As we press the implication of this principle further back to examine primary assumptions, it soon becomes clear that *pupil needs* must be determined by reference to some other criteria outside themselves.

On what basis are these needs determined? As soon as this question is raised it becomes clear that pupil needs cannot stand by themselves, but that they must take their place within a broader frame of reference. Our objectives, even those which relate most intimately to the life and ongoing experience of the pupil, must be basically determined by the nature of the Christian gospel.<sup>7</sup>

Here Christian education is seen as moving on beyond the point of view of humanism. It is seen as specifically a phase of faith and an effort to nurture the growth of faith and its manifold forms of expression.

One of the most timely subjects dealt with in this statement is the need for Christian education as carried on within Methodism to be related to the principles and life forces of Protestantism. We are faced with various types of religious education:

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 34.

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that of the Mohammedan, with its authentic book and rigid laws of life; the Jewish, with its formal texts and careful methods of teaching; the Roman Catholic, with its emphasis upon the authority of pope and church. In making our differentiation we hold that Protestant Christian education does not follow strictly these or any other types of religious education. Its genius is indicated in the way its curriculum and teaching procedures reveal certain principles peculiar to Protestantism, such as:

1. Respect for personal integrity should characterize both our goal and our method. . . . The center of personal integrity is not the isolated self, but the self in living contact with God. . . .

2. Personal warmth as well as intellectual respectability characterizes the essentially Protestant method and product. . . .

3. Beliefs are more than formulated statements to which the faithful give unquestioned mental assent. Beliefs are primarily personal in that convictions lay hold of the individual even as he lays hold of them. . . . The derivation of the English word "belief" is symbolic. It seems to come from "by life." True faith, therefore, is something we believe so much we are willing to live by it.

4. The Protestant emphasis is experiential rather than institutional.

. . .

5. The Protestant point of view recognizes and insists that there is a gospel to be declared, but it never forgets that there is a child of God to be educated. . . .

6. In establishing the educational relationship of church and home to the pupil we must avoid falling into neat mechanical stereotypes. Fellowship rather than academic pedantry must characterize Protestant procedures.

7. The Protestant process of Christian nurture develops community among the "learners." . . .

8. Increasingly the Protestant educator must see that he is leading persons to become living members of the "Body of Christ." . . .

9. It is our aim that Christian education should lead every person to see his life as a plan of God. The Protestant emphasis on the sanctity of all worthy occupations means that the Christ-centered individual finds in his daily task of whatever nature the means of serving and glorifying God. . . .

10. The world mission of the Church becomes, by thoroughgoing Protestant teaching, an integral part of the experience of every person."

<sup>a</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

In various ways the statement points out the bearing of its various affirmations upon the creation and use of the curriculum of Christian education. They indicate the progress made since the earliest efforts of this type which persons with a concern for Christian education put forth.

In the last few sentences of the report the members of the Committee on Principles in the Curriculum showed that they realized that their task had been little more than begun:

As this statement is examined further, clarification and enrichment will take place. Even though full agreement may not be reached by those who discuss what is set forth, it will not be difficult to understand and come to a consensus about the basic concepts which have been described. To pass through the experience of searching for the roots of Christian faith and of discovering how Christian education finds its own rootage in the Christian religion and to understand the relevance of these insights to curriculum construction cannot but give its reward in terms of Christian growth and the exhilaration of concentrating our minds on the things of God.<sup>9</sup>

### 30—SOURCES OF HELP FOR A WIDENING PROGRAM

Perhaps we have not said enough concerning the audio-visuals as one of the tools to be used in enriching the curriculum. It might be well to point out more specifically what our denomination has done both in co-operation with other groups and through its own efforts. In 1946 the Board of Education conducted a three-week seminar on the campus of one of our universities, during which we made our first serious exploration into this field. At that time we hazarded the prediction that audio-visuals would play an increasingly important part in the creating of our curriculum. We quote two recommendations coming out of this seminar:

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.



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That large flat pictures be made available to juniors. [These were already in use in teaching intermediates.] Also that the increased use of illustrations in *Highroad* be commended.

That suggestions be incorporated into teaching plans in the periodicals for using specific projected pictures with various units of study.

The more or less tentative findings of this seminar were discussed in the Curriculum Committee. In fact, at meetings of this committee it became a practice to evaluate audio-visuals and to discuss the question of their use as curriculum aids.

A second seminar went further into the matter. Completed films and film strips from outside sources were studied. The group also prepared production outlines for use in creating our own audio-visuals. Certain judgments were expressed, some of which we quote:

Audio-visual resources have an effective potential for Christian teaching. Certain knowledge, skills, understanding, attitudes, and actions can be achieved in Christian teaching more effectively when wise use of audio-visual resources is made. . . .

Because these materials are potentially effective tools for learning . . . a greatly accelerated program of leadership training is needed.

Coupled with the need for a program of leadership training is the urgent need for a comprehensive program of evaluation of existing materials—resulting in making available to church leaders utilization guidance materials. . . .

In the planning of new curriculum, audio-visual needs should be planned for at the same time as the needs for printed materials are considered.<sup>1</sup>

We have already described the ways in which the Methodists shared their experience in this field with co-workers from various denominations in two International Council workshops. In these meetings we gained much as we learned of the advances which others were making. The leadership provided by the International Council of Religious Education was of much value. Because of the spreading interest in this matter, the Curriculum Committee set up a Standing Committee on Audio-Visuals in the Curriculum, which systematized our work and made it possible for serious judgments concerning our work to be expressed. For

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the 1947 Seminar*, pp. 86-87.

example, we were advised as to how audio-visuals might best be used in the curriculum:

To recreate the past, as in church history and Old Testament units.

To bring the distant close, as in missionary units.

To make personalities real.

To make emotionally charged situations objective.

To introduce new content into an essential truth; to relate commonly held concepts to living situations.

To stimulate an immediate response to a situation.

To isolate and emphasize segments of subject matter in order to achieve a particular purpose.

When an overview is wanted for a whole area. . . .

Visual materials should not be used:

When the use will materialize a spiritual idea or concept;

As a substitute for a first hand experience;

When the use will impoverish or limit a concept.

Ten types of audio-visuals were studied: the documentary film, the dramatic film, the abstract film, nonanimated art in motion pictures, motion pictures without obvious human element, the short discussion stimulator, the direct teaching approach, the repetitious approach, the divided film strip or movie, and the use of marionettes and puppets in motion pictures.

We were able to report to the Curriculum Committee in January, 1950, that four audio-visual items were in process of production under Methodist supervision; fourteen leaders' guides were being written for use with audio-visuals produced outside our denomination; and four production outlines were being criticized and revised for our use. A year later we reported that fifteen additional leaders' guides had been published and eleven were being prepared; also that eight audio-visuals would soon be produced. These reports indicated the good beginning we had made in providing audio-visuals as tools for the enriching of the curriculum.

Little has been said so far about the circulation of church-school literature in The Methodist Church. It has gone forward with very gratifying results. We desire to record a dramatic incident which occurred while the Board of Education was in session in 1947. The 225 millionth copy of church-school periodicals published since Methodist unification was presented by the

editor to the Publishing Agents. One of the agents then presented this copy of *Child Guidance in Christian Living*, bound in an embossed cover, to the bishop who was serving at the time as Chairman of the Editorial Division of the Board. At the end of the second quadrennium of the Board's history it was estimated that more than 300,000,000 copies of our dated and undated materials had been published.

Such a good record might have made us content in our task had it not been that we were constantly being spurred on by developments outside our field of work. Several denominations had made startling advances in curriculum construction. An interesting movement in the creating of curriculum had come to our attention. In fact, several of our schools had discarded our literature and adopted the methods and materials which were being developed. Conference leaders had been observing what was taking place and were giving us their impressions. A member of the staff of the Board of Education was asked to attend a workshop conducted by Dr. Ernest M. Ligon of Union College, Schenectady, New York, in which the curriculum was discussed. Dr. Ligon, himself a prominent figure in religious education in America, was the originator of this plan. It rested on eight character traits described as personality goals which the author had developed from the Beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew. The learner was expected to adopt one by one the traits or goals around which the curriculum was built. A fee was charged each church adopting the plan. The church contracted to provide time, equipment, and teaching personnel as needed. Parents obligated themselves to make this teaching project their first interest and to report on what took place in the home teaching. Our staff member studied the operation of the Ligon plan thoroughly and made a full report to the Curriculum Committee. We were impressed by two paragraphs in the statement, which we quote:

A study of Ligon's plan of character education shows two points at which we might improve our own curriculum: (1) by simplifying and publicizing our own curriculum; (2) by striving for closer cooperation between home and church. . . .

Our objectives are clear to members of the Curriculum Committee who see the outlines. . . . But we have made little effort to help parents understand just what was expected from them or what the church school is trying to accomplish through its program. A brief statement



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to parents at the beginning of each unit might help them realize what that unit is supposed to accomplish. A monthly or quarterly letter to parents might be included in each pupil's periodical. Instructions for calling in the home and interviewing parents and pupils might be included in each of the teacher's periodicals. . . .

Closer home and church cooperation may be fostered by local church parent-teacher meetings or a parents' seminar at the beginning of the church school year. Parents' classes using *The Christian Home*, study groups for parents with attention focused on the objectives of the curriculum, sermons on the teaching functions of parents and continued units of study on Christian home life in the curriculum for each age group.\*

All these made their contribution.

Partly as a result of our study of the Ligon Plan we secured the help of several annual conference leaders and launched in thirty local churches a home-church co-operation project. The account of what was done is given in a report made to the Curriculum Committee, part of which we give here:

First, each church made a study of its program. This helped them [the workers] discover weaknesses in their regular program which should be strengthened as they went on with the project. For instance, one church found it had no accurate record of attendance or enrollment in the church school, much less a family record for each family with children in the church school. . . .

The churches most successful were those that held monthly meetings of officers and teachers. . . . In each church after a training session, visitors called on every family with children in the church school. They explained the project as a joint effort of church and home to produce better teaching. Most parents signed an agreement to carry out the directions offered them. . . .

Special guides were provided from the editorial offices—a general guide [for each home] and supplements to be used with each piece of lesson materials used in the family. The general guide pointed up the observance of special days in the home and suggested plans for worship, recreation and various other family activities. The supplements called attention to materials [for each child] in the children's periodicals. . . . Each quarter the teachers asked the parents to fill out a report form and express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with each child's progress. . . .

\* *Report of the Curriculum Committee to the General Board of Education of The Methodist Church on the Ligon Plan, 1947, p. 27.*

## CHILD AND CHURCH

Every church in the project thought it worth while and usually reported an increase in average attendance during the project. No special evangelistic effort to reach out for new members was put forth. Yet many new members were received because they felt that the church was carrying on a worthwhile program. The results were in direct proportion to the interest and hard work of the church leadership. Where there was sufficient concern about home and church cooperation successful results were obtained.

This was a creative enterprise in which both local church, conference board, and general board workers participated. To the writer it seemed to be the correct approach to the problem of bringing home and church school together in the use of the curriculum. In various places the projects were carried on for several years. It might have been wise to develop a regular program in which such co-operation was given a high place in the work of the local church.

Serious efforts at curriculum construction can hardly make solid and steady progress without the help of research. We had no facilities for doing research, but we gave marginal time and effort to doing what we could. We secured some help from the national government. The International Council of Religious Education gave some assistance. Methodist universities and seminaries aided us in various ways. The first study made by the interstaff group doing research was a modest one. We selected two annual conferences and tried to find out what use was being made of the *Adult Student*. The data obtained was valuable.

Our second study was more extensive. It sought

to determine something about what the Methodist Youth Fellowships are doing in the local churches in Methodism, with information about the background of church and community.<sup>3</sup>

We received 530 completed questionnaires and much important information. The broadly graded lessons were not undercutting the other material for youth, as some had feared. The story papers were being used by nearly 50 per cent of the pupils. Workers with youth were making fairly good use of their helps.

<sup>3</sup> The Committee on Research of the Curriculum Committee of the Board of Education of The Methodist Church. Study No. II—*A Study of the Methodist Youth Fellowship*, p. 1.

The next project sought information about adults and their leaders and brought us similar information.

We directed the third study toward the objective of trying:

to determine what is going on in the churches which are having Sunday afternoon [or evening] meetings in addition to the regular evening services and M.Y.F. [Methodist Youth Fellowship].<sup>4</sup>

In some areas the churches were finding the effective use of Sunday evening a serious problem. Some churches were dark at that time or had a poorly attended meeting of the M.Y.F. This was a valuable period of time which those concerned with Christian education were anxious to use. Through our study we secured judgments and suggestions from many pastors and their helpers. After much study and experimentation a rich program of worship, fellowship, and study came into being along with a new periodical devoted to the best use of Sunday evening in the local church. After several changes of title the publication was given the name of *The Sourcebook*.

We made other inquiries concerning the readability of the youth and adult publications. Here we obtained some professional help. We were not surprised to find that it is very difficult to work in a planning situation and hold in mind the actual "grass root" situations in which our materials will finally meet their fate. At many points, however, the periodicals were measuring up fairly well to the demands made upon them.

Since more and more local churches were using audio-visuals, we were asked to study the situation which had developed in the use of these tools in teaching. We found that less than one fourth of the churches possessed or had access to audio-visual equipment. Except in the case of children's classes there was no regularly planned use of audio-visuals. In the programs for Sunday evening the use of these tools was increasing. Nearly half of the churches reporting were building audio-visual libraries. The most frequent use made of audio-visuals was: first, for entertainment and fellowship; second, for worship; third, for providing information with which to enrich a given unit of teaching.

As we brought our research activities to a close we were surprised at what had been accomplished in spite of the handicaps

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Study No. IV—*A Study of Sunday Evening Meetings*, p. 1.



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under which we had worked. We were amply rewarded by the amount of information which had been brought together.

The Board of Education gained important help in the seminars conducted under its sponsorship in the universities and theological seminaries of the church. In one seminar designed to study creative religious education, a select group of well-trained pastors examined and evaluated the program and curriculum of religious education in the local church. Some really important findings came out of the work done. We quote a few recommendations from the report of the group:

That the curriculum continue to make large use of Biblical material as one of the major resources for religious living; . . . that additional materials be developed which will give practical procedures for Christian education in the home; . . . that the General Board of Education provide guidance . . . so that the pastor and other workers will understand the curriculum to be "experience under guidance" rather than as simply lesson materials.<sup>5</sup>

Other seminars dealt with the leadership which the pastor is expected to give to the local church program of religious education. We quote some of the more salient paragraphs coming out of one of the reports made:

Most churches have a study program of some kind. It may be nothing more than a poorly conducted Sunday school. . . . However, when the minister works according to a philosophy of Christian Education which conceives of the Church as a School for learning the art of Christian living, the *content* and *type of materials* made available for the use of classes and teachers in the local church must be a major concern.\*

Then followed an outline for the minister to follow as he seeks to discover his responsibilities:

I. *Understand the underlying philosophy of creative education upon which modern curriculum materials are built.*

II. *Understand that curriculum materials are not to be regarded as ends in themselves. They are prepared as guides to creative teaching and as a stimulus to the learner's growing religious experience. . . .*

<sup>5</sup> *Report of Seminar on Creative Religious Education, 1946, p. 3.*

\* *Report of Seminar in Creative Religious Education, 1948, p. 8.*

III. *Understand that all materials have their limitations, as well as their strengths.*

IV. *Examine critically the large variety of materials available for varying types of situations and local needs.*<sup>7</sup>

A great deal could be reported concerning the advice and counsel which came out of each research project and seminar; suggestions in regard to language difficulties, the use of the Bible, the teaching going on in church-school groups, the use of enrichment tools, and the like—they were worth all the efforts put forth. They supplied solid help even when sharply critical.

The rapidity with which the program of curriculum construction has proceeded would have been more than we could handle, had it not been for the help which came to us through various channels from our helpers in home and local church.

And “still the wonder grows”—that a church’s commitment to meeting the needs of a child should have been driven to such efforts to provide vital Christian teaching. Our title continues to intrigue us. *Child and Church* provides a gripping saga of Christian education and its curriculum.

## 31—PAUSING TO ASSESS

The Episcopal Address to the General Conference of 1952 included a significant section on the church-school literature of Methodism. A number of memorials criticizing the point of view exhibited in the teaching materials and proposing certain changes in the way the curriculum was being constructed were in preparation. The address makes reference to these. Not in the writer’s knowledge had such attention been given to the church-school literature. This led him to include some of the statements in the Episcopal Address, as follows:

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

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The Methodist Church is the largest distributor of Church-School literature in the world. . . . Our distribution of lesson materials is at an all-time high. . . . We are determined that both in form and content our literature shall continue to meet the needs of an ever-widening circle of readers.

The Methodist Church is a broadly representative Church. Its members have different inheritances, insights, outlooks, and cultural backgrounds. . . . Since the days of the early disciples there probably has never been gathered into a single body of believers such a wide variety of intellectual outlook and Christian experience. . . . To prepare Church-School literature that will be acceptable to this wide range of personal and social attitudes is a difficult, if not impossible, task. Our editors must write for the whole Church and they must ever keep in mind these differences among our people. The framework within which they work must be composed of the Christian gospel as it applies to personal and social redemption; the Bible as the inspired Word of God; and The Methodist Church and its mission to the world. Behind the editors is a Curriculum Committee composed of soundly intellectual and devotedly loyal Methodists, and back of them is a Board of Education, chosen by the Jurisdictional Conferences. Editors are not free-lance writers. They are subject to constant supervision, advice, and counsel. They make mistakes like all the rest of us. Sometimes their material is misjudged and misinterpreted. Often the criticisms are positive and constructive, occasionally devastatingly unfair. Is this not to be expected in a time of nervous tension and almost universal fear? We live and operate in a free Church, but our freedom must always be tempered and conditioned by the liberty that is in Christ whose mind is our law and whose will is our goal.

The report of the Committee on Education, adopted unanimously by the General Conference, makes specific references to the memorials referred to:

We note that these memorials are concerned with matters of faith and interpretations of social issues rather than with matters which can be implemented into legislation by action of the Conference.

However, we sincerely feel that these memorials should not be slighted simply because they cannot become matters of legislation.

In different ways and in diverse degrees of intensity they have called upon the editors of our church school publications for special emphasis upon various doctrines both of religion and social theory. In some instances the plea has been made that editorial content should be severely limited to a particular point of view.



We have the most sincere regard for the great care in the advancement of true Christian doctrine and religious social theory by editors and writers engaged in producing our church school literature. The above memorials are appreciated in so far as this is their intention, although we feel that it could be impossible to vote concurrence or non-concurrence because of their non-legislative nature.

Having said this, we feel that it is needful to remind the Church that the entire content of all the above memorials has been more than adequately cared for in the statements of the Curriculum Committee of the Board of Education. In 1948 a statement entitled, "Some Points of Needed Emphasis in Making the Curriculum of Christian Education" was issued to the Church. It was uncompromising in its devotion to the basic principles of Methodist belief and Christian social ethics. The recent (1952) statement of the Board of Education's Curriculum Committee is entitled, "Educational Principles in the Curriculum." It is a fifty-page presentation of the basic religious doctrines which our church school literature should proclaim. As for social doctrines underlying our literature, this document rightly asserts, "The curriculum does not set itself up to be a judge, but is designed to help persons become aware of the problems involved and the possible solutions, to supply resources that help persons to think and to clarify issues, to weigh values and to find their way through to decisions that are in keeping with the Christian faith."

We are convinced that a prayerful reading of these two statements of the Curriculum Committee of the Board of Education would be an adequate answer to those who are fearful that subversive religious or social doctrines will creep into our literature.

To all those within The Methodist Church whose concern for our church school publications has been heightened during these years of tension, we urge a thoughtful study of the above suggested documents which may be followed by careful reading of all the publications. . . .

To assist the churches in becoming acquainted with all these types of literature we recommend the chart, "Resources for Christian Teaching" which is available from the Methodist Publishing House.

The chart and its accompanying explanatory pamphlet just referred to were issued in the effort to help the rank and file of church-school workers discover how the unity of the literature is found in the Christian gospel. Its subtitle explains its purpose—"Resources for Christian Teaching in The Methodist Church Help Persons Understand, Accept, and Share the Christian Gospel." Built around this inclusive aim are the goals toward which

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the curriculum for each age group is directed. Take, for example, the goals for the curriculum for intermediates:

Understanding of and sense of fellowship with God the Father. . . . Growing understanding of and commitment to Jesus Christ. . . . Increased knowledge of the Bible. . . . Understanding of the Christian heritage, the story of the Church. . . . Learning to live with others in the spirit of brotherhood. . . . Becoming active in church membership. . . . Achievement of Christian attitudes and relations in the home and in boy-girl relations. . . . Understanding of and dedication to the missionary enterprise. . . . Understanding of Christian beliefs.

This is built on the inclusive aim that the goals for each age group are possible experiences which might be used to help achieve the goals of Christian teaching. From the chart we list the possible experiences of intermediates:

Individual and group worship in home and church. . . . Study of the Bible, church history and biography. . . . Participation in the total life of the church through attendance, fellowship and giving. . . . Cooperative Christian relationships in the community. . . . Leadership training in groups and through specific tasks. . . . Relations in the family and with other boys and girls . . . activities influencing the choice of Christian vocations.

Next on the chart come the resources (curriculum materials) for use in guiding persons in the various age groups through the experiences which might help them achieve the desired goals. These are suggested for appropriate use in the very small school (Broadly Graded Lessons), the average school (International Group Graded Lessons), and the larger school (International Closely Graded Lessons, and various other items). The chart and accompanying manual made it possible for parents and workers in local church schools to keep in mind, discuss, criticize, and build teaching programs and plans on what the Curriculum Committee was developing. We also brought all information up to date through the circulation of *Forecast* each quarter.

In 1952 the Board of Education looked back over what had taken place during the twelve years of its history. It noted some thirty-nine happenings which might be called "firsts" in the area of church-school literature. We mention some of them:

All graded curriculum for the church schools of Methodism. (Uniform lessons were not in use anywhere.)

The emergence of an adequately organized and thoroughly functioning Curriculum Committee recognized as worthy of creating or passing on all teaching materials used.

The provision of broadly graded lessons designed especially for the small and less privileged church schools.

Publication of monthly periodicals for officers and for teachers of each age group.

Publication of a special monthly periodical for parents with children still in the home.

Publication of a special periodical carrying helps for workers concerned to enrich Sunday evening meetings.

Development of curriculum for use by parents and teachers of very young children, for older youth, for younger adults, and for aging members of the church.

Co-operation in producing materials for use in training candidates for church membership.

Publication of graded teaching and worship pictures for various groups as needed.

Publication of *Bible Action Pictures* dramatizing by means of cartoons exciting narratives from the Bible.

Formulation of an extensive program of production of audio-visuals; also the preparation of guides for use in incorporating audio-visuals into teaching.

Construction of a series of undated electives organized as an integral part of the total curriculum.

Preparation of basic statements setting forth the way in which our teaching materials are rooted in the Christian faith.

Co-operative production of materials for leadership schools, weekday and vacation schools, church camps, and special courses in the Co-operative Publication Association.

Experimentation in local churches to discover ways of bringing the church school and the home into vital and effective relationship through the curriculum.

While the editors were at work in bringing about the achievements listed, they were giving much time and effort to the operations of the International Council of Religious Education. Within the calendar year 1949, our editors devoted an amount of time equal to seventy-four-and-a-half days to work in their offices on



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enterprises of the International Council; three hundred and twenty-eight days in meetings outside our offices at a cost of \$5,600. We considered this a good investment which repaid us in many ways. A considerable amount of time was devoted to helping those in our mission fields who were devoting themselves to curriculum construction. It became a custom to participate in seminars along with other staff members from the Board of Education in which crusade scholars, older nationals, and missionaries on furlough also took part. For instance, the theme of the seminar held in 1949 was "The Planning and Production of a Curriculum of Christian Education." There was careful consideration of the principles involved in curriculum construction. Situations in the fields represented were described as well as ways of creating indigenous materials. Out of one of the groups in the seminar came this statement:

The seminar agreed that the present tendency on the mission field to discontinue using the Old Testament except with [older] students is unwise; that its use should not be restricted but that it should be used thoughtfully. The group was reminded that especially in the Eastern countries the people are familiar with certain Old Testament ideas and practices in a way that western people are not. An example is the idea of ceremonial uncleanness. While this is foreign to Americans, it is not to Asiatics nor to certain peoples in Africa. Certain members emphasized that the people should not be encouraged to think of the Bible as magic or to take the attitude of idolatry toward it. A better view is that Christ is the center of the Christian religion and that the Bible is the record of Christ and his Gospel. [One participant] reminded the group that the Bible was lived before it was written. We should think of it as a window through which we look at real people, real experiences. Too often in our thinking the Bible is like a moving picture stopped momentarily instead of moving. The truth of Christianity is not based solely on the Bible. The fellowship of the early Christians and of all Christians since then also contributes truth. Yet the Christian fellowship should not be cut loose from Scripture.<sup>1</sup>

Insights from our co-workers in other sections of the church, like the one just reported, were sources of enrichment to the participants from America. It was customary for persons appointed

<sup>1</sup> *Seminar on Christian Education for Nationals and Missionaries, 1949, Scarritt College.*

to construct curriculum in foreign fields to spend time in our offices and attend meetings of the Curriculum Committee.

At various stages in our story we have paused to list the curriculum materials in use at a certain date. For the record we are listing those reported as in use in 1952.

Certain materials were provided for use with closely graded courses. These included:

Illustrated books for nursery children, nursery letters to parents, and teachers' manuals.

Kindergarten courses in the form of pupils' leaflets, activity sheets, messages to parents, and teaching manuals.

Pupils' books for primary children, teaching pictures, teachers' manuals, and department superintendents' manuals.

Workbooks for juniors, teachers' manuals, and department superintendents' manuals.

Guidebooks for intermediate pupils, reading books, teaching and worship pictures, leaders' guides, and counselors' guides.

In undated form we also published leadership texts, camp units, vacation school units, weekday school units, and various types of electives.

Dated materials were provided for pupils, teachers, and officers in schools using group graded and broadly graded lessons. Reading materials were provided in five story papers. In their categories we list the dated materials:

For officers, teachers and other workers:

*Child Guidance in Christian Living*, a monthly for officers and teachers in the children's department.

*Workers with Youth*, a monthly for teachers and other workers in the youth department.

*Adult Teacher*, a monthly for teachers and other workers in the adult department.

*Church School*, a monthly for superintendents and other general officers, department officers, and pastors.

*Workshop*, a monthly for leaders of seniors and older youth.

*Sourcebook* [for the Methodist Sunday Evening Fellowship], a quarterly providing suggestions for worship, fellowship, recreation, and the use of audio-visuals. For parents:

*Christian Home*, a monthly for the home and for use in parents' groups.

For pupils in the Children's Department:

## CHILD AND CHURCH

*Kindergarten Lesson Pictures*, color picture folders for children of four or five years.

*Primary Class*, colored pictures in folders.

*Bible Picture Cards*, for primary children.

*Junior Quarterly*.

*Teaching Pictures for Beginners*, large four-color pictures related to each lesson.

*Teaching Pictures for the Primary Class*, large four-color pictures.

*Teaching Pictures for Juniors*, large, four-color pictures.

For pupils in the Youth Department:

*Lessons for Intermediates*, a quarterly.

*Intermediate Fellowship—Evening Meetings*, a package of folders containing programs.

*Highroad*, a monthly for seniors and older youth containing lessons, programs, and other materials provided in support of the youth program.

*Christian Action*, a quarterly containing materials for older youth.

For students in the Adult Department:

*Adult Student*, a monthly containing the Adult Bible Course, adaptations of uniform lessons to provide help for adults and forum resources.

*Wesley Quarterly*, containing uniform lessons provided for adults.

*Visitor's Leaflet*, for visitors to classes.

*Home Quarterly*, containing lessons, Bible readings, and worship material for the aging.

*Learning for Life*, a quarterly containing special courses for young adults. Can also be used as undated material.

For reading:

*Pictures and Stories*, a weekly story paper for primary children.

*Trails for Juniors*, a weekly story paper.

*Boys Today*, a weekly story paper for intermediates.

*Girls Today*, a weekly story paper for intermediates.

*Classmate*, a weekly story paper for seniors and older youth.

For very small schools with three or four classes:

*Primary Class*, a quarterly for younger children.



*Children's Class—Teacher's Quarterly*, for teachers of younger children.

*Junior Quarterly*, for older children.

*Boys' and Girls' Class—Teacher's Quarterly*, for teachers of older children.

*Bible Lessons for Youth*, a quarterly.

*Bible Lessons for Youth—Teacher's Quarterly*, for teachers of youth.

*Bible Lessons for Adults*, a quarterly.

*Bible Lessons for Adults—Teacher's Quarterly*, for teachers of adults and church-school officers.

*Program Quarterly*, containing simple programs for meetings of youth.

We provided twenty-eight periodicals for schools with a fairly large membership and adequate equipment and seven periodicals for smaller and less privileged schools. This made a total of thirty-five dated publications. We were now issuing a larger edition of *Forecast* containing information concerning materials available for each quarter sent weeks ahead to officers of the church school, and also undated booklets giving specific information concerning materials to be used over a calendar year, such as *Resources for Leaders of Children*, *Youth Plan Book*, and *Brace Up Your Minds*, for leaders of adults. The chart and manual already described, *Resources for Christian Teaching*, were coming to be generally used.

What has been reported here indicates that within the first three quadrenniums of the history of the Board of Education of The Methodist Church some progress has been made in curriculum construction. We must be fair, however, in comparing what we have done with what our predecessors accomplished. They may have met the needs of their constituencies better than we have done. They were pioneers; we are pioneers also. They did their work under difficulties more severe even than those which almost brought us to defeat time and again. From generation to generation the scene has changed. In each the story of curriculum-making may have been much the same. Our predecessors have spurred us on by their ability and example. They have passed values on to us which we have used as we carried on our work. On their foundation we have built—and we have tried to keep in vital contact with the Great Overseer of the task.

## 32—WHAT DOES OUR STORY MEAN?

To the reader it may mean many things, some of which the writer might never imagine. But be that as it may, even if poorly told, this account of *Child and Church* is quite a story. Since the one who has gathered and recorded the data and tried to peer into their meaning cannot imagine with dependable accuracy what it all means to his readers, he must take the liberty of pointing out what things to him have more than usual significance.

One of these is the capacity of the human spirit to strive for its development. As we have seen, there have been periods when the child was allowed no worthy place in the life of the church. The claim that growing life was something precious to be nurtured and brought to proper fruition seemed to those in power to be an offense against a stern deity whose glory was rooted in the fixedness of his rule.

But the rights of the child were not for long without supporters. Time and again someone was ready with a degree of insight into the laws of spiritual growth to dare to support the claims of growing life upon the church. The spirit of man has a way of leaping over or breaking through any barrier which threatens to crush or rob it of freedom. There was the breakthrough in the schools of Moravia. There was the uneasiness of John Wesley as he felt the blighting demands of a dour theology. We see him at Herrnhut trying to discover the secret of the school which respected the place of the child. Thus freedom kept breaking forth in the hearts of leaders and their followers. It has been difficult to think of Jesus and the children and then give the child no worthy place in the Christian fellowship. But escape from the prison of custom and prejudice has always been difficult. Even after escaping it has often been possible to recapture the ones who have broken free. And any who aided in the

escape often had to suffer for it. Freedom to grow in the Christian life, like all freedom, has been costly. Such freedom can be preserved only at the price of vigilance. So our story would have us believe.

Another meaning which might be found is that the recognition of the demands of growth and the handling of these demands call for more commitment than many churchmen are willing to give. A father awakes to the part which parents are to play in the nurture of Christian growth. He is all but stampeded over what is demanded of him. He hints to a friend that he might just as well resign from the office of parenthood. It takes a brave and committed parent to keep at the task of providing conditions of Christian growth in the home. A church-school teacher discovers that there is nothing laborsaving about teaching. If he does not consider giving up his task, he may be tempted to cast about for "short cuts" or ways of easing the demands of the task, such as using mechanical methods of transmitting pure content to the memories of his pupils. The pastor faces the temptation to sympathize with his workers as they complain of demands made upon them; to encourage them to discover easy-going methods and unchallenging materials which they wrongly suppose might be aids to Christian learning. It takes a brave and committed teacher and pastor to face and assume the demands which Christian growth makes upon the church. In a visit to friends in the country one decides to go to the little church to which kinsmen have belonged. It is a plain building with no facilities for children. But it has a beautiful and well-kept graveyard. All appears to be undisturbed and peaceful, especially the beautiful lots in the cemetery. There are few indications that growing Christians, young and old, have really "lived in" this house of God. In many churches, both urban and rural, the demands of Christian growth seem to require too much. This has been one of the handicaps of Methodism.

When such a condition exists we fail to realize that our great fellowship centers religion in experience. Experience of God and growth in that experience is not to be confined to the requirements of peace and comfort; we hold to formalized beliefs. We carry on worship with forms and symbols sanctified by ages of use, but we still hold to experience as the outcome of home and church life greatly to be desired. We find that beliefs and wor-



ship can be used to arouse deeper desire for God and more complete response to the approach of God. We guide the child as he uses the Bible, as he prays, as he becomes familiar with the belief and work of the church so that he, in his own way, may become increasingly God-conscious. This means that as the child grows toward adulthood he must be helped to keep his religious concepts centered in his own changing personality. A child with strong religious impulses and interests had grown out of childhood. In some distress she told a religious adviser that it seemed that she had "lost her faith." The ideas that once meant so much to her were not so meaningful now. She was facing new facts and passing through new experiences; things did not seem to fit together. She was beginning to wonder if hers had not been a "hand-me-down" experience received from her parents. She was using experience that someone else had achieved. The counselor suggested that she might really be struggling to find God for herself rather than be satisfied with what she had received from others no matter how much she loved them. Then came her own deeply personal experience of God with the excitement and ecstasy which come with a sweeping discovery. Methodism owes such guidance to her children. We are at our best when we meet the demands such an obligation places upon us.

Our story shows that Methodists have been restive at times when trying to work with those with fixed ideas of religious living and a circumscribed place for the growth of the child. Our forefathers frequently rose to challenge the static form of faith and the mechanical concept of the curriculum. Because this "late-comer" among the religious bodies dared to make such a challenge, our forefathers were ridiculed as members of a bumptious and disrespectful church. They were not respectful enough toward what was fixed; they were too given to disturbing the deadly quiet of what was established. Of course they were considered "dangerous." That is the lot of any one who puts forth pioneering efforts in the field of curriculum. At times it has been fashionable to contend that education and religion are enemies. To be considered religious one must beware of being classified as desirous to make discoveries and to struggle with intellectual problems. In some situations the Bible scholar and the progressive educator are to be kept under surveillance. Great suspicion was raised when graded lessons were approved by the International

Sunday School Association and its Lesson Committee. Those given to bibliolatry stood in opposition to using anything except the Scriptures. Our forefathers stood firmly against such a demand. Along with others of like mind they enriched the new graded lessons by using much Bible along with materials in the field of missions, church history, temperance, and the like. Much later, at great cost, a certain co-operative agency had set up a high standard for curriculum for children. When the organization showed a tendency to give up this standard we were heard from in no uncertain terms. As usual we were restive when trying to work with those with fixed ideas of religious living and a somewhat carefree attitude toward the religious growth of children.

A meaning which became increasingly clear to the writer as the story proceeded was the importance of reconciling two problems related to curriculum. The complex, growing personality of the child must be provided with varied and pliable curriculum if his religious needs are to be met. It is also important to do everything possible to bring the curriculum into simple and usable form. The problem is not so forbidding as it first appears if we understand what is meant by simple materials. Without looking deeply into the matter one might think that a church-school lesson is simple when it is limited to a few elementary ideas expressed in words of one syllable, when the material is easy to grasp and can be memorized without much difficulty. Such simple materials present only one side of a question. They are free of any of the more difficult concerns of life. Children can make use of much material of this type and learn very little. But the basic question is, "What kind of material can be used most effectively in helping the child to learn the Christian life?" Will he learn this merely by repeating what is told him? Or by avoiding effort? Does he learn when he has no opportunity to come to decisions or think his way through to conclusions? Certainly none of these procedures help forward the progress of Christian learning.

Such methods are not simple in that they have little to do with the way a child learns and grows as a Christian. A church-school lesson is simple when it is related to its religious purpose, when it awakens the learner, when it calls for discovery and choice and action. It is simple because it fits in with the way Christian learn-

ing takes place. It would not be simple if it were unrelated to the spirit and goals of Christian living.

In our curriculum we face the paradox of the complex being also simple insofar as such a term carries a Christian connotation. The laymen who make teaching possible in our church schools are realizing this. They are acquiring skill in using the materials which lend themselves to use in vital Christian teaching. The normal person is complex even before he reaches maturity. If we limit our teaching to the most elementary and unchallenging facts he finds no challenge. He responds with little satisfaction. The teaching and materials are difficult because they are foreign to his needs and interests. He finds vital and challenging materials appealing, for they bring satisfaction. In the highest terms they are simple. It is too heavy a penalty to place on our children for us to give undue attention to the clamor for so-called "simple" lessons when these demands come out of lack of understanding of what it means to learn to live the Christian life.

The story which he was relating brought to this editor a meaning which he had rather faintly realized. He found that the genius of a church can be expressed in one of its best forms through the curriculum which it creates. During times when the work was unusually difficult the editor would be shown the ease with which some other denomination achieves its success. He learned to make this reply: "We are trying to express the spirit and genius of our own church. We have no desire to ape the operations of our neighbors." An inspired person may express his genius gloriously in poem or song or drama; the same may be true of a church. Methodism has brought its genius to expression in no finer form than in its literature—especially in the creative teaching materials which have flowed from its heart.

Paradoxically, the free expression of our genius enriches our relations with our co-workers of other faiths. In fact one of the fine aspects of such a comradeship is the pooling of the convictions and achievements of those who participate. One expression of genius meets another and there comes about a stimulating enrichment of Christian brotherhood. This meaning comes out clearly in our story. Nearly seventy-five years ago curriculum craftsmen with various Christian backgrounds began to work together. In a very real sense they were pioneers of the ecumenical movement. The demands of the task drew them together



and opened their eyes to the wider dimensions of the work they were doing. That was God's work and they were performing it together. Some of the writer's richest experiences have come about as he labored with brilliant, sympathetic, and committed servants of other denominations. When the new interest in the ecumenical movement was developing some years ago, a group of church-school editors happened to be meeting in the same hotel with a group of ecumenical leaders. The editors were invited to a fellowship meeting which they enjoyed. At the meeting they were told in glowing terms of the new movement and urged to give it their support. When the editors resumed their work the general opinion was one of pleasure over meeting new friends, but also of surprise over the assumption that the ecumenical movement was something new. In the best sense of the term, to them, it was "old stuff."

Our story has given up no more arresting meaning than the critical importance of effective communication of the imagery of the Christian gospel. The writer has quoted frequently the slogan once used by an important educational agency of the nation, "Civilization moves in the direction of its dominant imagery." Illustrations of the truth of this statement greet us on every hand. Let us use a single case. Within the last few years the Chinese people have come under the spell of a strange and benighted imagery foreign to their past. The old has been washed away, as fiendishly skillful use has been made of the new imagery. Within less than a generation a new nation has come to birth.

We who are committed to the Christian gospel have the most irresistible of all imagery to be given to the minds of men. This fact places an almost unbearable responsibility upon those assigned to the task of supplying curriculum. They must find ways of putting the imagery of the Christian gospel into its most appealing forms. They are called upon to do their full part, as image brokers, in communicating the imagery of the gospel and making it dominant. In a life-and-death struggle with forces bent upon snuffing out the light of the Christian hope they are given emergency orders. More than once our story has brought this out, but never more strongly than now.

One more meaning given by the story of *Child and Church* is that Methodism looks upon man as educable. In all phases of his

being he can learn, the religious aspect of life being no exception. Man is educable. Christianity is a teaching religion in the vital sense of the term. As we understand it, Christianity is not a commodity packaged in books and forms of worship; it is something fully alive and deeply personal. As God is a spirit, so the experience of God, the heart of faith, is something spiritual. It is a spirit communicated from person to person—from God to the believer, from the believer to those within range of his personal contact. It is the intercommunication of this spirit at which our curriculum aims. It is something difficult to diagram; it evades the effort to formalize it. One learns to be uneasy in the presence of precise logic and rigid formality. He is encouraged to hear that the unexpected had happened when the spirit of God moved without hindrance. It is the part of wisdom to prepare for a lesson in class, but at times the best-laid teaching plans cannot be carried out because spontaneous learning has taken place. A primary child had been captivated by the joy of giving to the work of the church. He was impressed by the truth that the Christian gives himself along with his offering. His teacher was startled when the child had requested the collector to bring a basket along with the collection plate; he wanted to get into the basket and give himself to God along with the coin in his hand. If she was surprised, the child's teacher should also have felt a sense of satisfaction. Her vital teaching had reached a worthy outcome.

The reader may find many other meanings in the story of *Child and Church*. Much treasure is buried in the achievements of our church as it has tried to meet the demands of the nature of growing life. What reader and writer discover might be far more significant than much that it recorded in the ordinary annals of the church.

### 33—CHILD AND CHURCH— HERE WE STAND!

A pastor was describing to a class of children being prepared for full entrance into the Christian fellowship what it means to join the church. He had not proceeded far in his explanation when a little girl interrupted him with, "I belong to the church. I've belonged here all my life. Why do I have to join?" The child was really paying a tribute to her pastor and to her Christian parents and teachers. In fact she was setting forth the basic position of Methodism concerning the child and the church.

This incident may remind the reader of the situation described in the opening sentences of the book. This question was being discussed among several ministers, one of whom did not think that the church was under obligation to nurture Christian growth. He contended that the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit would be hindered if such nurture were carried on. It was heresy even to imagine that a child was in reach of God and could place himself in God's hands and go through life under divine guidance. The fact of the matter was that this objector was trying to place limits around the working of the divine Presence. When the logic of the situation closed in on him, he left the company.

Another minister deeply committed to the position that the child has a significant place in the kingdom of God was visiting in the home of a minister with an opposing view. He felt that only a belief in total depravity could provide the high honor which the believer owed his Maker. During a long and fruitless discussion the lovely three-year-old daughter in the home was playing in the room. The visitor asked the host if he thought that his daughter was lost in sin. The host replied that he so believed and felt that the child must grow up and have a violent conversion experience in order to be saved. "This



means," the visitor remarked, "the further she goes into sin, the more dramatic will be her conversion and the more complete her salvation. She must not be taught God's love. This might weaken the violence of the conversion." Such logic was too much for the father and he began to try to understand the basic position of his church concerning the place of the child in the kingdom of God. We hold that the child is never out of reach of God. He has to decide to move outside the divine love since he is within that love to start with. The church has the lofty mission of seeing to it that the child and God's saving love must never be separated.

We must confess that the position here set forth has not always been held consistently by Methodists. Wesley held a dim view of the place of the child in the plan of God when he made his contact with the schools in Moravia. Nor can it be said that he ever passed completely out from under the influence of his strictly Calvinistic mother. However, Wesley tried to find a rational basis for believing that the child should find salvation within the kingdom of God rather than to need to be dealt with as a complete sinner. John Wesley went far enough to give his followers good grounds for feeling that this was a basic position of the church.

Such a position has been difficult to hold. Again and again the dogma of total depravity asserted itself. There were times when Methodists were condemning, or at least disregarding, childhood at the very time they were organizing Sunday schools. Waves of pessimism concerning the benighted state of mankind have swept over the church leading to hostility toward the claim that a child can have a real experience of God. Along with all this went demands for cut-and-dried teaching materials so constructed as to be easily memorized under the pressure of discipline.

The title of this chapter is familiar to our readers. It paraphrases the immortal words of Martin Luther when he stated his convictions concerning Christian faith and the church and announced that on these convictions he took his stand. There have been times when the followers of John Wesley needed to be called back to the basic positions concerning the child and the church. We have suggested that we may be called to take such a stand today. It is easy for attitudes and methods to harden around some fallacious or outgrown point of view; for those who believe in the validity of a child's experience of God to weaken under the pressures bearing down upon them, to flee from any thought

of change, back to the unchanging, the rigid, the supposedly solid bases of the past. Compounding this tragedy is the fact that we are trying to carry forward our teaching at a time in which men are entering new and vast areas of knowledge and making radical and rapid changes as a matter of necessity. The feasibility of democracy is yet to be proved. The machine is helping to remake the man. The microcosm within us and the macrocosm about us are in a state of revolutionary change. We stand in peril when we respond in fear to the conditions we face. As a leading educator tells us:

The influence of these ideas [the impact of science, machine industry, and our experiment in democracy] upon current education has been profound. Under their impact education is ceasing to be an affair of the mere accumulation of knowledge or of inert abstract ideas and is coming to be a guided experience in exploring the significant experiences of personal and group life and of securing intelligent control over them. Its interest is becoming less in the reproduction of the past and more in forecasting the future in terms of the unrealized possibilities of human life. It is less an authoritative imposition of adult-pre-determined ideas, habits, and ideals, and more a sharing of adult and youth viewpoints, the subjection of ideas and techniques of living to the fresh criticism of a rapidly changing culture, and the responsible assessment of the ends and techniques of living by self-realizing persons. Education is coming less and less to be thought of in terms of assigned and formal tasks and more and more in terms of a creative experience set in the midst of a stimulating and releasing opportunity.<sup>1</sup>

As we understand the matter this is a correct view of vital Christian learning which must be carried out in our homes and church schools. The conditions we face call not only for a curriculum pulsating with life but for teaching materials sensitized to our new situation. Our children need to gain faith that can expand the idea that "this is my Father's World" to include the divine presence in all the cosmic changes through which they are passing. The curriculum is to lead them to be curious concerning God's plans, free to make their responses to what they find, and brave to move forward with God into the future. It is for such prophetic education and its curriculum that we must stand.

<sup>1</sup> From the chapter, "The Nature, Content and Form of the Curriculum" by W. C. Bower, pp. 176-177, in *Studies in Religious Education*, *op. cit.*

Our story would not be brought to a proper conclusion if we did not view the subject of child and church in a different way. We have been pointing out what the church does for the child when it lives up to its highest ideals. But the child also does much for those who nurture and guide him. A father and his adult son were returning from a visit to a mother and tiny baby in a hospital. Both were thinking "long, long thoughts." They were trying to assess an entirely new situation. The birth of this child had made parents of a son and daughter; it had made grandparents out of parents. Here the new father and the new grandfather were trying to find themselves as they recovered from what in a sense might be looked upon as a cataclysmic experience. What powerful results occur when a child comes upon the scene! This new arrival was indeed a catalytic force in the area of personal living. Further effects of the arrival are a home with a new and active center, with the child's needs and demands affecting every thought, plan, and action. The family will never be the same again; neither will the relatives and the community.

This infant also confronts the church with much the same catalytic force, with demands just as pressing. The child shifts the very center of the church's life, or should do so. Elements in the new situation are portentous. Here are elements of destiny affecting the progress of the kingdom of God. Is the Christian fellowship to move toward becoming child-centered? Is it to become like a family, not merely a place where the older members enjoy themselves and carry on their work, but a nurture center in which children can grow year after year in the experience of God toward maturity in Christian experience?

The needs of the child make exacting demands on the home. His demands upon the church are equally exacting. He needs love that understands and looks ahead. He needs to feel that we recognize his experience of God as fully valid. He needs room to move about with his thoughts and make decisions that are his very own. He needs to keep enlarging his grasp of God. He needs help in being guided to a well-founded and total (for him) commitment to Christ. He needs to sense himself as a vital part of the Christian fellowship, expected to carry responsibility. Again and again needs emerge which the church is called upon to meet. When the church takes account of the child it can never be the



same. It undergoes a sweeping transformation as the young catalyst exerts his power.

In another connection we described a visit to a pleasant undisturbed country church. Nothing suggested that it had been "lived in." The same might be said of many churches. The visitor sees its finely kept sanctuary and smaller gathering places; he is impressed with its beautiful windows and religious symbols. But from these he would gain no impression that young life belonged there, that things were going on in which young life participated. That would call for baby beds, nursery equipment, the signs of singing and play, evidences of free and spontaneous worship—all the things that showed that this church was being "lived in"; a place where children felt at home with the heavenly Father; where in their materials and activities they found a drawing power to grow—and grow as God's children.

Is such a prospect too much for the older members? Then let them think of a home without children—so quiet and carefree, so comfortable, so much like a desert. Or let them think of the church without children—so well kept, so free of disturbance, so uncomplicated, so full of suggestion that this church was moving along the road to becoming a placid, well-kept graveyard. So would be the home without children, the church without children.

To view such a possibility is to fill our hearts with dismay. In home and church we must have our children. As they drive us to change they keep us alive. The church must prize the child and handle him as a great human treasure. And the child must continue to transform the church, holding it close to the Christ whose spirit could never grow old.

Such is the spontaneous joy that our children would inject into the life of the Christian fellowship—if we let them. Our church can turn its back upon such a prospect, but at forbidding cost. We have stood for the nurturing church and the child with power to keep it young. Here we stand today. Can we do otherwise?



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